

Army Life
of
S/Sgt Michael P. Falcone

Sgt. Michael P. Falcone

August	4,	1943	New Cumberland, Pennsylvania
August	13,	1943	Amarillo, Texas
December	16,	1943	Laredo, Texas
March	7,	1944	Hammer Field, Fresno, California
April	1,	1944	Tonopah, Nevada
April	28,	1944	Hamilton Field, California
May	16,	1944	Fair Field, Juison, California
May	17,	1944	Hawaii, Oahu Island Hickam Field
May	18,	1944	Canton Island, South Pacific
May	19,	1944	Guadalcanal, Southwest Pacific
June	7,	1944	Admiralty Islands, Southwest Pacific
August	20,	1944	Wakde, New Guinea, Southwest Pacific
September	25,	1944	Noemfoor, New Guinea, Dutch East Indies

Targets

Truk	Noemfor
Yap	Palau
Woleai	Halmahera
Biak	Ceram

Balikpapan, Borneo

Southwest Pacific Wakde
Admiralty Islands Moemfor
Los Negros Island
Mokerang Field

307th Bomb Group 371 Squadron

A.P.O. # 719 June, 1944

Crew

Lt. Walter A/ Scalese
Lt. Stephen Fuda
Lt. Paul H. Phillips
Lt. Joseph E. Novakorits
T/Sgt. Charles H. Neville
T/Sgt. Chester E. Matz
S/Sgt. George J. Kacoyannakis
S/Sgt. Robert L. Dyson
S/Sgt. John T. Stough
S/Sgt. Michael P. Falcone

On May 10, 1944 at 0300 G.C.T. We left Fairfield, California. Our first stop was to be Hickman Field on the Island Oahu. We arrived at Hickman early in the afternoon of the 17th. During our short stay in Hawaii we noticed some small reminders of the destruction the Japanese ^{had} done when they pulled their sneak punch at Pearl Harbor. We had an opportunity to visit Honolulu, Waikiki Beach, and many other sights, famous of Hawaii. On the morning of the 19th we took off for Canton Island. After an eleven hour trip we arrived at this lonely Pacific Island to refuel and rest, for the night. Dyson and I slept out in the plane, to keep guard. Early in the morning we took off, this time for Guadalcanal. We remained at the Canal for 10 days. We spent most of our time flying fuel consumption, attending classes, and getting used to the tropics. It rained almost every day and the humidity was unbearable for the first few days.

On the morning of June 3rd we left the Canal for Los Negros Island where we are presently stationed. We were assigned to the 307 B.G. 371st Sqdw. The Admiralty Islands are located just off the coast of New Guinea, where the 13th Air Force is presently operating. This was our final destination. We flew nearly 1/2 the distance around the world. No sooner had we settled down in our newly, own-constructed tent, then we were on a loading list for our first mission. The day we were all looking forward to had come.

June 7, 1944

Mission # 1

Our target was Truk Island. This Bomb Group received a presidential citation for its raids on Truk. We encountered three weather fronts and the visibility was practically zero. About 20 minutes from the target we got separated from the formation, in a large cloud. Thus we burst out of the cloud over the target without the protection of the formation. A lone bomber is duck soup for fighter planes. We unlcoosed our bombs and scurried back for home. We considered ourselves very fortunate not to have been attacked by "zeros" Our first mission was over and our journey home went without mishap.

June 9, 1944

Mission # 2

Truk Island was again our target. The weather was a little better today. We reached the target at 11:15 A.M. No sooner were bombs away, about 8 "zeros" scooped down on our formation. They made several passes at our plane but scored no hits. Ack, Ack was moderate and generally inactive, and unaccurate, although we did receive several small flak holes in our wings. Our journey home was without mishap.

June 11, 1944

Mission # 3

For the third consecutive time our target was Truk. This important enemy base in the Pacific was taking a terrific pounding from both the 307th and the 5th Bomb Groups. We dropped our bombs on the target amidst heavy A.A. fire. This time 15-20 Jap fighter planes pounced on us, consisting of Zeros, Hamps and their newest fighter, Tojo. We received about 10 holes in the fuselage, but no serious damage occurred and no one was injured. Our journey home went without mishap.

June 15, 1944

Mission # 4

Again Truk was our target. Penetrated the usual bad weather and arrived over the target on scheduled time. Ack, Ack was moderately heavy. The fighters today were exceptionally eager, coming in at 1 o'clock generally and breaking away as close as a 100 feet away. They also dropped many aerial phosphorous bombs, some coming too close for comfort. Truk really took a pounding today which eventually proved to be the knockout punch. Many large fires were started.

June 18, 1944

Mission # 5

Truk again was our target. Not much to write about today. The target was completely covered and our bombs were dropped on E. T. A. Our journey home went without mishap.

June 23, 1944

Mission # 6

Our target this time was Yap Island, another enemy stronghold. The target was farther away than Truk. We were supposed to rendezvous at Sowl Island and proceed on to Yap. Due to the weather and faulty navigation we never saw Sowl Island. So, we went on to bomb the secondary target Lagoola Island. A small enemy weather and radio station was bombed. Our journey home was long and without mishap.

June 28, 1944

Mission #7

YAP Island was again our primary target. This time we found Sowl and proceeded on to Yap with the rest of formation. The fighters jumped on us before bombs away and really were eager. ACK ACK was thick. They gave us a running battle for 45 minutes. Our fuselage was sprayed with about..... (The next page original diary was missing)

(Mission #8 missing)

This was all that was recorded of Mission 7.

The diary picks up again at the ending of Mission No 9.

Fighter planes attacked and stood with us for 45 minutes dropping many phosphorous, and fragmentation bombs on our formation. We got back safely.

July 13, 1944

Mission # 10

Yap was our target. Bombs were successfully dropped on the target. Ack, Ack, was moderate. The fighters were very aggressive and succeed in downing one B-24. The unfortunate plane was hit in two engines and was falling back and losing altitude rapidly. The zeros all pounced on him. He hit the water and sunk almost immediately. Three survivors were later picked up. This was their first mission. Lt. Ball, the pilot, was from Pennsylvania.

July 19, 1944

Mission # 11

Yap was again hit hard. Only 3 interceptors came at us, one being shot down by our nose gunner, Bob Dyson. Ack, Ack, was light. Our journey home was without mishap.

July 19, 1944

Mission # 12

Including Search-13

Again we hit Yap, concentrating on the air strip. A good percentage of hits were seen. A. A. was moderate but accurate. A zero made a vertical pass at 11:00. We were all firing at him, and although he was smoking, he blazed away with his continuous stream of lead. He succeeded in connecting with 2 20mm, one in our left wing between number 3-4 engines. It severed the aileron cable, and knocked out the hydraulic system. The fuselage was peppered with nearly 200 holes. Another 20mm. knocked part of horizontal stabilizer off. We had a few flak holes in the tail. No one was hurt. Our pilot made a beautiful landing using the automatic pilot.

July 30, 1944

Mission # 13

Our target was Woleai Island. It turned out to be a real milk run. No interception and no A. A. fire.

August 4, 1944

Mission # 14

Yap was our target. No interception. Had heavy A. A. Most of our targets have been pretty well softened up, so our outfit is moving to Wakde off the coast of New Guinea.

August 21, 1944

Wakde 15

This island is infested with mosquitoes. There are a lot of fighter planes here. The Japs are only 4 miles off the coast inland in New Guinea. We can hear the steady fire of our big guns driving the Japs deeper and deeper into the jungles. This island took a terrific pounding. There isn't a cocanut tree which hasn't got its top shot off. A lot of dead Japs were removed. There were 998 Japs on this small island, 996 were killed, the other two were taken prisoners. The stink of thir bodies is still around. Wrecked Japanese planes can be found all over the Island. We're hitting Palau from here. Saw Bob Hope and his troupe ^{on the} 24th. Wakde is 3 hours from the Admiralties.

August 28, 1944

Mission # 16

For the first time we hit Palau Islands. We took off from Wakade Island shortly before 8 a.m. The target was Kover Island, concentrating on supply areas and fuel stores. There was no interception but the A. A. was intense and accurate. I still marvel at not getting one single hole in our ship. It was the worst Ack, Ack the 307th has ever encountered. One of 372nd ships was hit by a direct burst of A. A. Its right wing came off, and the entire plane fell apart and went down in a blazing ball of flames. No one was seen to bail out. The 372nd is really having tough luck of late. Palau is going to be a rough mission from now on.

July 28, 1944

Mission # 17

Our crew flew a search mission lasting 12 hours. I didn't fly, because 3 members of a lost crew went along to search for their buddies. We found out later that we got credit for a strike.

August 29, 1944

Our pilot was appointed as flight commander and promoted to first lieutenant.

September 2, 1944

Mission # 18

Palau was again our target hitting Kovor town. We had unusually good weather. We dropped our bombs from 16,000 feet. We had as a sqdn. 95% hits. Ack, Ack was again terrific. But the Squadrons who followed us really got it, especially the 424th, who lost a ship. 5 men were seen to bail out. Our trip back was without mishap.

September 5, 1944

Mission # 19

Palau was again our target. Our specific target was the Airdrome on Pelelu Island. We carried 5-hundred-pound bombs. The runway is constructed of concrete. We really plastered it. Ack! Ack! was heavy, moderate, and accurate. No ships were lost today. On the way up to the target we spotted a huge American task force heading to invade Palau. So, today's mission will probably be the last on Palau. The trip homeward was quick, and without mishap. 5 men were picked up on Lt. Parenti's crew which went down on the 2nd of Sept.

September 10 to 22, 1944

We were in Australia on leave.

September 30, 1944

Mission # 20

The entire Island was buzzing with the pending mission. The place was crowded with news correspondents. This was all for a good reason. We were going to pull the longest bombing mission in the history of the South Pacific war with Japan. Our target was Borneo, in the Netherlands East Indies. One of Japan's most vital oil supply bases. Take-off time was scheduled for 1:20 A.M. 72 planes carrying almost 100 tons of bombs were scheduled to take-off. The weather was very good all the way up to the target. There, to our disappointment, the target was completely covered with clouds. 35 fighters rose to battle with us. They stood with us for 35 minutes and I doubt if there was a round of ammunition left in the entire squadron. We dropped our bombs thru the clouds and we never saw them hit. The Ack, Ack was heavy, moderate and fairly accurate. We lost about 5 planes. Our squadron and all its ships came back. It was a long mission lasting 16 1/2 hours. But, because of the cloud coverage, it didn't turn out as successful as was expected. Noemfor sure looked good to see again.

October 2, 1944

Today was the most disasterous day in the history of the 13 A.A.F. And one of the sadest days of my life. Everytime I think of it, I'm thankful that I was lucky not to have been one of the boys that flew on this fateful day. The 307th Bomb Group was practically annihilated over Borneo. The Ack over the target was the heaviest and most accurate in the history of the 13th's experience. 75 to 100 fighters intercepted our small formation. There wasn't a ship out of the 24 that wasn't hit. In all we lost ten planes. The remainder made it back but in such a condition as to remedy redlined for a long time. The casualty list was great. Three of my best friends were amongst them. The (Swede) better known as Milt Eliason, of Mora, Minnesota, an old time gunnery school and bunk mate, was shot down over the target. Four men were seen to bail out but no one knows who they are. Don Flaker, another friend of mine, was in the same plane. Joe Mikulski of Mahoney City, who came in the army with me and stayed with me up until now, he was hit by a 20 mm which exploded in his ball turret, knocking one of his legs off, and chances are he might lose the other one. He's going home, but not the way he hoped. He had a lot of guts-enough to pull himself out of the turret after his leg had been shot off. Other planes crashed in the

jungles, and some ditched. Some survivors have been picked up. Yes, it sure was a happy day for those yellow-bellied pygmies. But, we'll get even yet! It was a mistake, a costly mistake on the part of our leaders who under-estimated the strength of the Japs on Balikpapan, in Borneo. I feel lousy. I hope Milt, and Flake turn up.

October 11, 1944

Mission # 21

We went back to Balikpapan. This time it was an entirely different story. The weather was clear, and the target took a terrific pounding. Fires 2000 feet high were started with the smoke going up as high^{as} 20,000 feet. Three squadrons of P. 47's took off with two squadrons of P.38's from Morati, Halmahara and arrived at the target just before we did. What followed was one for the books. As the Jap fighter planes took off from the run-way, our P.47's pounced on them and shot them down. The ones that did get up were caught by the 38's who made short work of them. However about 10 interceptors did get to our formation, but effected no damage. I have to hand it to those fighter pilots, who all volunteered to escort us up to the target. Because of the long distance, many of them had to bail out for lack of gas. Ack, Ack over the target was heavy, intense, but very inaccurate. Yes, it was a bad day for Tojo and his boys. Balikpapan supplies 12% of the aviation gas for the Jap air forces. These missions are making headline news. The entire mission lasted 17 hours. And, to top it all off, we had to make an instrument landing, because of the bad weather here at Noemfor. Our group didn't lose a plane, but one of our pilots was wounded. I haven't found out as to whether or not they got back to the home base.

October 18, 1944

Mission # 22

Balikpapan was our target again. We carried 6500 lb. bombs. Our formation got together at the rendezvous spot and proceeded to the S. P. About 25 minutes from the target we ran into some bad weather, which split up our formation. We kept our course and didn't change it until we reached our E.T.A., at which point we dropped our bombs and headed back for home. We landed at Sansapor, where we spent the night. We refueled in the morning and landed here at Noemfor an hour and a half later. I think this is the last mission we are going to pull from here. We're moving again. This time it's Moraiti, an island in the Halmahera Group.

October 24, 1944

Mission # 23

Loaded with 5' 500lb. bombs, we took off at 11:45 P.M. Our mission was to bomb any enemy shipping sighted. At 8:30 A.M., flying along the Borneo coast, we spotted 5 small Jap cargo ships. Dropping down to 200 feet we made six different runs on the ships. Bombing and strafing, we sunk 2, damaged 2, and left the fifth in flames. On our way home we flew over the Elebes on reconnaissance. We encountered some light, intense, and inaccurate, ack ack. It was a highly successful mission, and a feather in our caps. We landed at Moratai, refueled and returned to Noemfor, landing at 5:00.

October 26, 1944

Today we were honorary pallbearers at the funeral of four who were killed when their plane cracked up on take-off. It was to be their first mission. We've been on the alert for 48 hours anticipating on a raid on the huge Jap task-force around the Phillipine area. The Navy has already engaged part of it and is doing a great job. I figure it will turn out to be the biggest naval battle of the war.

October 29, 1944 .

We took-off at 11:00 A.M. with 1 bomb-bay tank and a 3500 lb. bomb load. We were supposed to land at Morotai, refuel and take-off after the task force. However, after we were an hour out we were called back because of bad weather. Our radio was out so we didn't hear the order. We proceeded on and landed at Morotai. We were informed of the turn-back, so we took off again and landed here at Noemfor, just before dusk.

October 30, 1944

Mission # 24

Our target was Bacalod Airbase on Negros Island in the Phillipines. We took-off at 1:30 and bombs were away at 9:10 A.M. The target was plastered, our Sqdn. getting 100% in the target area. Seventeen fires were started, and the concussion of the 1000 lb. bombs going off could be felt up at 10,000 feet. Enemy action was nil. No ack or fighters. All we had to contend with was some rough weather. We landed at Noemfor at 4:00. To date I have 297.20 hours of combat.

November 4, 1944

Mission # 25

This time our target was Alicante Airbase, also on Negros Island in the Philippines. We took off at 3:00 A.M. and arrived at Alicante at 11:00. We were the lead plane in the group. Just before we arrived at the target we had to jettison the bomb-bay tank. The rods holding the bomb-bay tank jammed, the left bomb-bay-door, so it would open only part of the way. However, we dropped our bombs and they hit the target nicely. We had all been expecting a hell of a lot of fighters but we only saw two or three. We were supposed to have had one squadron of P-38's as escort, but because of bad weather at Morotai they never got off. However, some P-38's from Leyte in the Philippines happened to be near Alicante, thus accounting for the scarcity of enemy fighters. Alicante is the home of the famous suicide-squadron of Japanese Divine Wing. We landed at Morotai and spent the night there. To climax everything we were raided by several Jap planes who dropped many phosphorus bombs, several hitting right close by. We were kept awake for 1-1/2 hours. We left the following morning.