

World War II Diary



Charles Martin Kimerer
August 3, 1908 – December 19, 1987

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

Introduction

Charles Martin Kimerer was born in Meridian, California, in 1908. He was the grandson of Martin Kimerer, who came to California on a wagon train in 1851, settling in Cranmore, Sutter County.

Charles joined the Army Air Corps two days after Pearl Harbor and served until V-E Day. He kept a diary and later recorded it on audiotapes. The following transcripts are from those tapes.

He returned to California, farmed for a while and later went into real estate. He died in Colusa on December 19, 1987.

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It is 1978 and I am Charles Martin Kimerer. I was born in Meridian, Sutter County, California, on August 3, 1908. On November 29, 1929, I soloed my first airplane, which was a Curtis JN4D, better known as a Curtis Jenny, which was powered with a Curtis OX5 8 cylinder and water cooled engine and rated about 80 to 90 hp. The airport was at the old Del Paso Heights in North Sacramento, just about where McClellan Field is today. In 1934, my brothers and I bought an OX5 Commandaire and we nearly wore that thing out, until I finally spun it in on a downwind turn. Neither my passenger nor I was hurt very much. In 1936, a friend and I went into partnership in the rice seeding and crop dusting business. We had two biplanes, which we converted into dusters and these planes had Wright J5 engines, the same as the Wright Whirlwinds that Lindbergh used on the Spirit of St. Louis. In 1938 my partner crashed and burned and I carried on with the business until I was drafted into the United States Army Air Corps in 1941.



I started keeping a diary and that's what this tape is all about. My diary book was pretty small, pocket size, with mostly just notes transferred to a journal, and I will have to rely on memory at times. Some days were skipped and certain things left out because they were so terrible, but I am going to put them on this tape if it takes the hide off. And now I'll get along with the diary I kept all the time I was in the service in World War II.

1941 Pre-War

➤ February 18

I was drafted into the Army, sworn in at the Eagle Theater in Sacramento and sent to Monterey. I was then sent to McClellan Field and placed in Headquarters Squadron. I was the eighth draftee to enter McClellan.

➤ October 31

I was discharged on the over 28 years law. That was a real happy day.

➤ December 11

The first Thursday after Pearl Harbor when war was declared, I went to McClellan to enlist in the 7th Squadron but was told it wasn't possible because I belonged to the Enlisted Reserve Corps. I also tried to join the Marines but was told the same thing.

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1942 - Training

➤ January

I was recalled into active duty and was again sent to Monterey and then back to McClellan into Headquarters Squadron.

➤ May 4

The 7th Squadron and Headquarters Squadron left Sacramento on a troop train for Battle Creek, Mich. We were met by the 8th Squadron and the 62nd Group was now together. We trained pilots for a month and then the entire 62nd was flown down to Florence, S.C. We had very bad weather and one of the planes went down in West Virginia, taking more than 21 of my friends. That also was one of the roughest trips because we were overloaded and the pilots were scared stiff.

➤ July

I was transferred from Headquarters Squadron to the 51st Squadron. At Florence the 62nd Transport Group was reorganized into the 62nd Troop Carrier Group and placed in the Wing Command. Each squadron was given 13 brand new Douglas C-53s and we flew them for about two weeks, training pilots before we left. My airplane's name is the Lucy May and is the flagship of the squadron.



➤ November

Left on a troop train and arrived at Camp Kilmer, N.J. Plasik and I went into New York on a 12-hour pass and had a big old time.

➤ December

Christmas: GI turkey dinner on trays. Rained hard all day, slept, played cards and cussed.

1943 – North Africa

➤ January

We think we'll go to Africa, everybody is happy and in high spirits. Had a final overseas physical, started getting things together, bags were taken to the docks. Had a drill with 9,000 soldiers, 300 WACS and 200 nurses. Called Mother

➤ January 14

Left Staten Island at 7:30 in the morning, tugs towed us down the Hudson, then we were on our own. The Statue of Liberty went slowly out of sight. Very crowded on the boat and there is no wash water. We get one canteen of water for drinking. I have a bottom bunk, two over me. At first there were 4 boats but more joined, including a destroyer and a cruiser. Now there must be 25 altogether. Ice all over the boat, very cold. Two navy blimps and coast patrol planes followed us until about 2 PM. They say there are 7000 soldiers on this boat and I don't doubt it a bit. We picked up more boats somewhere. Near as I can count, there are 18 destroyers, 1 battleship, 1 cruiser, 10 or 12 freighters and tankers. The latter have P-38s on them. The stench

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1943 - North Africa (continued)

on the boat is suffocating. There is no water in the latrines. It is a hell of a mess. We have to use our life vests as pillows and wear them all the time we are out of bed. The sea is pretty rough and many are seasick today. So far, I am OK. We eat only twice a day and get very little then. I've eaten 10 candy bars today. Bought a carton of Camels for 60 cents, three pieces of candy for a dime.

➤ January 16

Wind howling. Patrol planes, Grumann biplanes, were catapulted from the cruiser and patrolled all day. Looks like they are shot from cannons. Anti-aircraft guns on all boats were fired off. Almost scared me to death. I still haven't felt sick. Still going east but zig-zagging and stopped completely for one hour today. Sea is pretty rough and there are a bunch of sick boys on board. Everything is getting dirtier and the stench is getting worse. We are right in the middle of the Atlantic and the Captain says we are headed for Casablanca. Went to a show tonight but had to stand up and it was suffocating so Plasik and I went out on deck in the fresh air, chewed tobacco and cussed. Can't smoke after 4:45 PM because the ship is blacked out. The other ships look ghostly in the dull hazy moonlight.

➤ January 19

Sixth day out and I'm tired of it. I always knew I wasn't a sailor. Zig-zagged all day, saw a turtle, some swallows and a duck. We were paid 5 dollars each and issued a little bag of stuff given by the Red Cross.

➤ January 20

Seven days out and if I was ever going to get sick it would have been today and tonight. Storming all day, waves occasionally break over the bow. We had wieners for supper. They were spoiled and turned green inside. The whole boat smells sour from vomit. There must be 4000 seasick boys on board tonight. I heard some shooting, went to check and found we were lost from the rest of the convoy, maybe because of the storm. No ship uses a radio.

➤ January 21

Caught up to the convoy this morning, sea still rough. Slightly poisoned on horsemeat. Had horsemeat hash last night. The battleship Texas, in the middle front of the convoy, fired some anti-aircraft guns tonight. It was like the Fourth of July. There are a lot of task force sailors aboard. They are Naval Air Corps and probably headed for a carrier.

➤ January 24

We are in hostile water, perfect conditions for subs. British PBYs patrolled ahead all day.

➤ January 25, 26

Docked at Casablanca at about 5:30 PM. Part of the convoy went onto Oran, Algeria. What a mess the harbor is in. Sunk, burned, bombed and shelled boats lay all around. A big French battleship was blown all to hell. Disembarked about 11 PM and, with about 150 pounds on our back, walked out to the airbase 12 miles from the beach, walking right through town. It was the most beautiful city, palm trees lined the streets, also pepper trees and the buildings were new and modern. The Germans had been here shortly before and some of the Arabs were still in

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1943 - North Africa (continued)

sympathy with them. We sleep in a hangar on a little straw on the floor and it's pretty cold. We are in the French side of the airport. For 12 days on the boat, I never had my coveralls off. I took a bath and had to wait in a line of 300 soldiers. There are two piles of wrecked planes; most of them knocked out on the ground, some French, American and one German bomber. We are at the airport at Casablanca. We call it Casey Field. There is a unit of French-Moroccan soldiers here and they all wear a red fez and red garrison belt.

➤ January 28

American pilots have been flying Spitfires all day, practicing dog fighting. The headquarters for the French Lafayette Espadrilles is here in Casablanca. It's a pretty hot outfit. They were given U.S. P-40s and went up to the front. I heard quite a few were shot down. They fight separately, instead of in a squadron. I saw Frenchmen flying Spitfires yesterday and they were flying them in a circle, pretty hot. They can sure as hell fly an airplane. Seems funny, the French soldiers here fighting with us were but a short time ago fighting against us. Quite a few B-17s in here for engine changes. They've been all over China and Burma. The crew sleeps next to me and one said he had been on eight bombing missions and downed three airplanes. General Doolittle was here yesterday, heard Roosevelt and Churchill were with him. Some guys caught an octopus on the beach. Homer, Hitchie and I went to a French beer joint filled with French and U.S. soldiers. Five gallons of beer cost \$1.25. The guys were taking it out in gasoline cans, canteens, cups, helmets, tin cans and everything else.

➤ January 29

Costa and I went over to the beach today. Every kid and man bummed and begged all of our cigarettes. Saw camels pulling plows. When we came back we found the rest of the outfit were flown up to Oran where the 51st is based.

➤ January 30

Had an air raid alert last night. Scared me stiff. No planes came over. Left Casablanca in one of the 8th Squadron ships and flew up here to this field, about 60 or 80 miles east of Oran. The Germans have just been run out of here. We flew over parts of the Atlas Mountains, looked very pretty. The 51st is together again and sure good to see the guys again. This is a very small place, built by the French, captured by the Germans, and now we have it. Got some back mail, 62 letters and a box of cookies. One of the 62 letters I received was from the Royal Canadian Air Force with orders to report for duty. Before I was called back up, there was a kind of underground outfit from the RCAF showing up around the crop duster fields trying to get duster pilots to join up with the RCAF as ferry pilots. They gave me a flight test and I was told I would hear from them later. Too late. Another thing I recall, around 1937 a Chinese man who ran a chop suey joint in Marysville kept showing up at the duster fields and asking the duster pilots to join up with Nationalist China. Those who did go ended up in the Flying Tigers with General Chennault.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1943 - North Africa** (continued)

➤ February 1

Major Hutchins gave us a lecture this morning on behavior in the combat zone, said we'd better hit the ball. Had a steak for dinner tonight, small but good. Some of the ships came in from the front, a couple of hundred miles east of here. Heard there was an Arab uprising in a town near here.

➤ February 4

The ships came in this afternoon from somewhere east of Algiers. They came back with eight P-39 escorts. The pursuit buzzed the field a few times and, man, can they go. Somebody brought in five gallons of stale beer in a gas can and it lasted five minutes.

➤ February 6

Ships left with a load of cargo to the front. Two were forced down, no report yet. Costa and I tapped into Fuzzy's cognac.

➤ February 7

Something's cooking on the front as there have been about 80 or 90 transports go over. Peck and Boyd gave the donkey a bath today, colonel's orders. That donkey did stink.

➤ February 8

All the transports in these parts are moving Rainbow Rangers. Starkey said the 62nd flew 500 of them up to the front yesterday, a distance of about 1200 miles from Casablanca where they were picked up. Heard bad news today. The Lucy May has been transferred out of the Squadron. Costa sold a sheet to an Arab this morning for 500 francs. That's 10 dollars. This afternoon I got 200 francs for a barracks bag. Caton sold two bars of GI soap for 50 cents. Sure wish there was a J.C. Penneys around here. Starkey had a sheet and pillowcase to sell but two MPs on horses chased him away.

➤ February 12

Costa and I got a pass and went to Parego on a Jeep. Had quite a time. All we could get to eat was eggs. They serve fried eggs, black bread and dry wine. Got a haircut, met some Mohammed Arabs. Latrines are not much more than a large barrel. Saw the French Foreign Legion drill and pass in review in front of some big shots. Got gassed up.

➤ February 13

Something hot is brewing up front. Starkey was just told to get ready to leave in the morning on a secret mission to the front. Five ship battle formation flight and might be gone for four or five days. I sure wish the Lucy May was back so I could go, too. Something is about to happen, I think.

➤ February 16

Scotty, Lt. Richie and I went to Oran on a truck for supplies. Oran is a pretty nice town, but very old. It's built on a cliff and heavily fortified. We stopped at the airdrome at Luscinia, hangars blown to hell, bomb craters everywhere. An A20 landed with wheels up, no damage.

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1943 - North Africa (continued)

➤ February 17

Got paid for January, 460 francs. The ships came back from Tripoli. Johnny Johnson brought back a Luger pistol he got from a captured German. Sure is a nice gun.

➤ February 18

All the ships are out. Heard that No. 32, Little Jig, was forced down. Keys went to the hospital with blisters on his eardrums. He's very bad and may be sent back to the States. Caton's also in the hospital with the same trouble and Stewart's ears were bothering him when he left. The doctor said it's caused from low altitude flying.

➤ February 21

Gulp. Heard the boat we came across on was torpedoed and sunk one day out of Casablanca on the return trip to New York. So goodbye to the John Ericson, a converted luxury liner and a big one, too. I'm sure glad she went down going in that direction. Typhus is just starting up and the Arabs are infected so we are not allowed to get near them. Got a carton of Camels from Mike and a package of cookies from Edith Spiva.

➤ February 23

Costa and I got a pass to Mostaganem, a seaport on the Mediterranean. We tried to buy some cognac but the Germans had taken it all. They had cleaned the town out of food and clothing. All we could get to eat was eggs and sardines. We broke an international law and spoke to a couple of veiled women and found out they could cuss in English. Came home on the bus. Fuzzy came back from Gibraltar, said the Rock was quite a sight. Sure wish I had a ship so I could go out. Don't think the Lucy May will come back.

➤ February 24

Six B-24s came in today on the way to Gibraltar. They flew from Alexandria, Egypt, nonstop nearly 2000 miles. They had been on 23 bombing missions and were full of bullet and flak holes. Was talking to George Plakas of the 7th Squadron. He had been up front flying wounded, said some were all shot to hell and burned by flame throwers. All were given the Purple Heart. Incidentally, George Plakas is a little duster pilot who used to fly for Red Jenson in Sacramento. Harold Morris just came in from Mostaganem. Said a couple of U.S. cruisers have a German submarine trapped inside the breakwater. It is laying on the bottom.

➤ February 26

The Major bawled us out for everything in general. Went down like water off a duck's back. Had a sex lecture on venereal disease. Had short arm inspection for lice and fleas. Fuzzy came back from the front and said they were flying casualties back to Luscinia and they are shot to pieces. I heard there were 8,000 GIs knocked off in yesterday's battle.

➤ February 28

Ships left for Cairo, Egypt. Costa won 100 dollars in a blackjack game. Had Swiss steak for dinner, think it was camel. Very dark tonight, no lights, and the wind is blowing a gale. Starkey got gassed up.

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➤ March

Helped Fuzzy pull a 500-hour inspection on 532. Dave Lindquister, a pilot, hit a tree with 35, Major Barrow's private ship. Tore off a wingtip. Poor old Dave, he was in the doghouse for quite awhile after that little job. He made it on into Luscinia and landed.

➤ March 6

Farina got a trip taking Captain Webb to Oran in a Jeep. Stormy night but I changed clothes and went along. Captain Webb went to see a nurse and we had the jeep to ourselves all the next day. Met Peck in front of the Red Cross. He and Booley have a room and stay in a hotel in Oran. Peck knows the place pretty good and we went all over town and through the docks. The Mediterranean is very blue. Saw a French horse outfit unloading off a boat and the British 1st Army parading down the street. Saw a good size convoy, including a hospital ship. One boat was torpedoed in the harbor. Started home about 9:30 PM. Almost froze in the Jeep.

➤ March 7

Helped change engine on 535, Father Time to the crew, the first C-53 assigned to us in South Carolina. Also pulled 200-hour inspection on 530 this afternoon. All the engines are worn out and leave a trail of smoke behind. Johnson and Caton got a 12-hour pass and were 24 hours overdue. They just came in and are worried. Found out later they both got busted to buck private.

➤ March 11

Costa came back from Algiers where he met one of the WACs we knew in Camp Kilmer, N.J. She said some of them were so homesick they had to turn in at the hospital. A German bomber was heard over Oran a while ago and we had an alert. The Germans are red hot after the transports. The big push started yesterday up front. There are enough GIs and equipment in Africa now to tear the place apart.

➤ March 15

Got up at 5:30AM and went out on 880, The Mongoose, on a courier run. That's Stewart's ship. Went from here, Nuvian, to Luscinia in Oran and picked up about 20 guys and all their baggage, mostly all high ranking officers. One was a Rear Admiral, a good old boy. Went over to Algiers. There certainly is a lot going on up there. P-38s, P-39s, Spitfires, Bullfighters. B-17s, and everything else. Flew back through the pass in the Atlas Mountains and saw the plane wreckage that Johnny Forrester was killed in. If they had been 50 feet higher they would have cleared that mountain.

➤ March 17

The boys went wild today. Vincent forged a pass and was thrown in jail at Mostaganem. Scott and Blount are AWOL and Otovitch stole a Jeep and is over the hill. The cooks are all drunk on lemon extract.

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1943 - North Africa (continued)

➤ March 18

Installed cowling tanks on 72. It's going down to the Gold Coast to tow back gliders. Otovitch is in the guardhouse and Scott, Blount and Vincent got one week digging slit trenches. The 62nd has airplanes all over Africa. This war would be rougher if it wasn't for the transports.

➤ March 20

Sure wish my airplane would come back or get a replacement. Costa and I hid out in 31 all morning and rested. We sure did need that rest. We were going to shoot some wild pigeons with a flare gun and fry them, but we didn't have anything to load the cartridges with.

➤ March 22

Helped Fuzzy with engine change on Little Jig. Twenty B-17s went over in tight formation headed for the front. There was a big meeting tonight of all officers, flight officers and pilots. Magners came in to tell me about it, but I was with Costa, Sessions and Butz out in a foxhole drinking a quart of whiskey, Australian booze that came in from Cairo on an 8th Squadron ship. Got a V-letter from my mother.

➤ March 24

Fifteen German prisoners escaped. Two were just captured out on the runway. Ten others were captured in Parego. Three are still loose. The guard is doubled. The Germans are raising hell up at the front. They pushed the British back again.

➤ March 26

Caton and I were picked to assemble a glider for the 51st. They are French made gliders and are sure flimsy looking things. Things are popping at Algiers. Fuzzy just came in and said the Germans are bombing hell out of things. Rios went up there on 880 this afternoon and hasn't come back. I wonder what happened to him.

➤ March 28

Costa, Caton and I got a pass and went to Mostaganem. Hired a two-horse taxi. The three of us were invited up to an Arabian house and all got separated. Had to tear a courtyard gate off to get out. Hasty retreat. Also visited some French people, whose house overlooked the Mediterranean. Very pretty view. Met Regina and Annette there.

➤ March 29

The British 8th Army and the Americans broke through the line last night. Heard Rome was bombed today. Ledger and Clark are playing the mandolin and guitar. Pretty good, too. Rios came in from Algiers. He was weathered in and the Germans bombed the base while he was there. Said he wasn't scared but I don't believe him.

➤ April 2

This afternoon everybody knocked off and went to a ballgame. The 51st vs. the Officers. The 51st won the game 17 to 3. We've got a pretty hot team. Pettit used to play for Cincinnati, Fritz pitched for St. Louis, Fleming played for Columbia University and Kalk pitched for Minnesota State. The officers didn't have a chance.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 - North Africa (continued)

➤ April 8

The sky has been full of transports for three days, hauling some British fighter outfit up to the front. Had a lecture on chemical warfare tonight. They expect the Germans to start using gas. The British 8th Army is going hell bent after the Germans from the east and the Americans are moving fast from the west.

➤ April 11

Made my first trip to the front today. We went up to Tafaroi and picked up 15 ground men from a B-26 outfit. This is the first time I got to fly a C-47 overseas after being checked out in Battle Creek, Mich. There were seven duster pilots checked out in what they called a pinch-hitter course. We landed at Montescu. We didn't have an escort. A C-47 is a lot easier to fly than an overloaded, under-powered old crop duster, I can tell you.

➤ April 12

This was my second trip to the front and a day I will never forget. Took off at 7AM. Went up to Montescu, unloaded, then took off right away for Tebessa. Germans had raised hell there. We picked up 19 walking patients. The poor devils had been through it. A German Stuka had come in from the west and strafed the chow line and killed many of them. They also dropped a skip bomb that went off in or near the entrance to a dugout the medics were using as a hospital and it cleaned them out. We also had six litter patients. Back in the air, we had one medic with us who wasn't hurt too bad. I was trying to help the medic with one of the injured, a front line nurse who had been in the dugout. Her face and breasts were blown all to hell. Her nametag said Rose. I took her hand and she said she was crying because she was afraid her mother wouldn't recognize her when she got home. And that's when I realized the war wasn't all about selling cigarettes and sheets to the Arabs.

➤ April 13

Montgomery asked General Eisenhower to remove all American troops from the front today. He wants revenge on the Germans and was heading out to mow them down. Magners had to fly back from Algiers over the Mediterranean and he saw an armada of submarines, cruisers, destroyers and over 140 battleships all headed towards Tunis. Rommel will be completely trapped in Africa by tomorrow night. The British army is 30 miles past Sousse.

➤ April 15

Nearly all ships are here. Slayton is down on the desert somewhere with structural failure. Rumors are flying around fast and thick. Each plane is being fully equipped. There are 150 transport pilots at Casablanca and new airplanes.

➤ April 20

Jones came in today. Hit an eagle or something over the Atlas. Knocked out the left engine.

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- April 23
Helped Keys on his ship this morning. Counted 419 shrapnel holes in it. He had the name Patches put on its nose.
- April 25
Easter Sunday. I was put on a detail to assemble the big 15-man gliders.
- April 28
Found out today why we haven't had much meat to eat. A boatload was sunk between Casablanca and Oran. Keys went to Oujda on 69, brought back a quart of cognac. Cost 14 dollars.
- May 4
The ships came back from the Belgian Congo, brought back some monkeys.
- May 5
Bad weather forced the British to retreat and they had to call in the Americans. Tonight the Americans are within rifle range of Tunis.
- May 7
Geisler and Bell came back with the Lucy May, 540, and going to stay here now. I guess Costa and I will be back on Lucy May again.
- May 8
The Americans took Tunis and Bizerte. The Germans are now on the run. Any day now.
- May 9
50,000 German prisoners were taken yesterday and today.
- May 13
The war in Africa is over. The Germans gave up yesterday and Mussolini called off his men today.
- May 14
Turned in all woolen clothing. Going to move but don't know where.
- May 15
Looks like we're going to Mascara. I guess tomorrow is the parting of the ways here at Nuvian.
- May 17
Left at 9AM and came down here to Matemore, which is about seven miles south of Mascara. This is in Algeria. We're back in tents on the side of a hill. Have to haul our water and there are no showers. The runways are cut out through a wheat field. Do not have to blackout here. Seems funny to see lights again.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 - North Africa (continued)

➤ May 18

Keys came in on 69, Patches. He has a job hauling General Alexander, a British general. 69 sure fixed up nice for the General. A brigade of English paratroopers is camped on the hill a half mile east of us.

➤ May 22

One year ago today I left home. Oran was bombed last night. The ships dropped paratroopers by the hundreds. Sure was a pretty sight.

➤ May 25

We're getting set for the invasion. British Airborne Infantry Brigade moved in today. 90 transports are supposed to drop troops. We practice paratroop invasion tomorrow.

➤ May 28

The jump went off last night, but if it had been the real thing the 62nd would have had to take the day off to bury their dead. They made an awful mess and dropped troops all over North Africa. One load was dropped in the lake. As far as I know two jumpers were killed.

➤ May 29

I never will forget last night. Two Jeep loads of us were invited over to a party given by the British 3rd Paratroop Brigade. They had an old beat up piano and they entertained us. And this was right out in the middle of the desert. They had a 500-gallon barrel of vin rouge, red wine. Everybody fouled out. Those British commandos are sure swell fellows and plenty rugged. They went clear to Cairo and picked up the piano in the bomb bay and brought it back up here and dropped it out in the desert on the sand. There was the piano and one guy played a banjo and another fellow had a horn of some kind and that was the music. And was that vin rouge rough.

➤ May 30

Went out on my first training flight dropping paratroops. Was the last ship in a 15-plane formation. Dropped them at 1 PM. Air was rough as hell. My God, but it's hot and dusty here. The pill-roller said if we stay here very long we will get tuberculosis.

➤ June 1

The 8th Squadron had tough luck last night. One of their ships hit a mountaintop. Four were killed. Watched troopers jump this morning. Saw two Roman candles. That's when the parachute doesn't open. Don't know if they were GIs or containers.

➤ June 3

Everybody has dysentery, some in the hospital with it. Struthers had to be a witness at the British court martial of a paratrooper who refused to jump. Found a turtle in my tent. Everyone is talking of the invasion, where and when. We are all wondering. Deathly sick all day, dysentery. Taking pills as big as GI buttons.

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➤ Jun 7

Went out this morning and dropped 15 paratroopers. One refused to jump. He will probably not be court martialed as this was only his fifth jump, but will be transferred to the infantry. They can back out any time up to the fifth jump. Went out again at 3:30 with 20 paratroops and dropped them. All went out real good, looked very pretty. Took a GI bath under a pipe tonight. Was issued the African campaign ribbon bar.

➤ June 10

This afternoon I went over and towed gliders. It was the worst ordeal I've been through yet, I think. Both pilot and co-pilot with nothing on the ball. My God, what a pair. They made ten trips and never got it right. Towing gliders is very, very hard on the engines.

➤ June 11

Took off tonight with 16 British paratroopers. There were about 40 transports. Nearly all got lost and couldn't find the target, so brought our load back. The rest were dumped all over Africa.

➤ June 16

Ten transports are dropping the 3rd British Paratroop Brigade. Most of them are Scottish. Hitchie is going out at 3AM and drop some more.

➤ June 21

Packed up tonight, ready to leave in the morning. All squadrons are packing.

➤ June 22

Flew up here to Tunisia. We are about 15 miles from the sea. Came up on 880, had to chase camels off the runway. We are camped in a sticker patch.

➤ June 23

Enemy planes came over about 4 AM, the alert sounded but nobody in the tent heard it. This afternoon I went into Sousse on a truck. Hitchie and I went through the ruins. Place blown all to hell. The town, pretty large, must have been a resort with a nice beach. Convoys going past towards Tunis, at the rate of 300 to 400 an hour. They are the British 8th Army coming in.

➤ June 24

Sousse had an air raid last night about 10 PM. We could hear the bombs drop but didn't see anything.

➤ June 26

Went for a walk, found land mines, two booby traps and unexploded bombs. Found six 1,000 pound German bombs hidden out in the weeds. Also an Italian helmet with a hole clear through it. Hitchie took a whistle off a German bomb. They were used to make the bombs scream.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1943 - North Africa** (continued)

➤ June 27

Fireworks sure flew last night. A German plane came over Sousse last night about 11 PM and made four passes and lit up the sky with tracers. Very beautiful. The drone of a German plane makes your hair stand on end. The props are not synchronized. A Bullfighter went up after it. Some of the guys went flying into their foxholes. And I was one of 'em.

➤ June 28

Got tired chasing scorpions and tarantulas out of my bed on the ground so made a bunk on top of some five-gallon cans. Heard that the Bullfighter knocked down the enemy plane.

➤ June 29

Went swimming in the Mediterranean this afternoon. About 24 troop ships anchored there and barrage balloons. Can't have lights tonight, expecting a raid. A crack English anti-aircraft outfit has been moved in. Had fried chicken for supper.

➤ July 3

Hottest day so far. Strong, searing, hot wind off the desert. The thermometer only reads to 122 and the mercury was to the top and still going and this was in the shade.

➤ July 4

Not so hot today, only 113. Something must have happened over in Sicily or Italy today. At least fifty B-17s came back from that direction. Everybody has to pull a 100-hour inspection on the ships, probably the last before the invasion.

➤ July 5

Salgado drew the mission flight today. I'm a spare and reserve. Wish I could have gotten it. Hope he gets sick. A British plane crashed in the salt lake west of here. The pilot got out and walked over here, all cut up.

➤ July 6

Stripped the ships of all extra equipment, even took the toolbox out. Too hot to work this afternoon. The wind blew off the desert so hot I had to take off all metal, including dog tags and pocketknife. Went swimming tonight, the sea calm as a lake.

➤ July 7

I was officially recorded as a combat crewmember on 52, Little Jig.

➤ July 8

The pilots and radiomen have already been briefed and know where we are going to strike, what we will carry, and take-off time but do not know what day. It won't be long now.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 - North Africa (continued)

➤ July 9, 10

They're off. At 7:15 last night the 51st and 4th Squadrons started taking off. All towed gliders loaded with men; equipment, bicycles, Jeeps, and each glider had 3000 pounds of TNT aboard. It was a sight I'll never forget and it was the real thing this time. After they all got off the ground, wave after wave of transports carrying gliders came over from the airfield behind us. As far as you could see in any direction, there were gliders being towed. I heard later the Mediterranean was alive with boats and barges all moving toward Sicily, the nearest about 3 hours from shore.

➤ July 10

This is the invasion of Sicily. Geisler came in about 2 AM. So far, no 532. We waited til morning and then went to breakfast. Pettit said when he turned his gliders loose; the machine guns cut them to ribbons. It was a real rough go. Their objective was to take the machine gun nests and ground batteries to pave the way for the landing barges. This was the first time in history that gliders had been dropped at night and the 51st squadron led the flight. About 6 PM, 532 came in. Young said his glider pilot would not cut his glider loose so Young had to land at Malta for gas.

➤ July 11

Started masking up the tail on 532. Things are going good over in Sicily. Heard today that the 51st Squadron was the first foreign aircraft over Sicily in the invasion. One hour later came paratroops dropped by some other outfit and three hours after that the barges landed. They had absolutely no fighter protection.

➤ July 12

The American 1st Armored Division and the British 8th Army have landed on Sicily. The 52nd Wing went out on a paradrop mission last night. Five planes were knocked down.

➤ July 13

The 4th Squadron and the 51st took off about 8 PM. Costa went out on 540. Tandy went out on 380. They are going to drop the troops on both sides of the bridge, about 12 miles from Augusta, Sicily. They've got a tough job, to take the bridge and hold it.

➤ July 14

Last night was a rough one. Nearly every plane got shot up. Jacobson got a 50-caliber slug through the belly of his ship that went through the radio operator's leg. Costa had the toughest luck. A 20mm slug exploded inside his left auxiliary tank and let all the gas out. Another 20mm tore off part of his right aileron and made a hole that peeled back the trailing edge of the center section. Costa is a nervous wreck. They had to give him sleeping pills. They were shot at by the British convoy, mostly. One of the pieces of bullet they found was marked USA. They were also shot at by enemy anti-aircraft and machine guns. In the last two nights, the 52nd Wing has lost 32 transports. The 4th Squadron had 6 ships knocked out of commission. No fighter protection. Costa brought his paratroops back. So did Young, in 532. Captain Blalock was forced down at Malta.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1943 - North Africa** (continued)

➤ July 16

Poor Costa is in pretty bad shape, nerves all shot to hell. They say our tactical missions are over. We put all the parachutes and stuff back in the ships. Supposed to start carrying wounded again.

➤ July 17

Nothing doing today. Slept on a life raft under the ship. The food sure is terrible. Nobody can eat it. We get mostly all C Rations. They chop the cans open with a cleaver. The cans have been stacked out in the sand dunes and you get C Rations with sand and maybe a few bugs.

➤ July 21

Homer and I got in a Jeep with Oliphant and went down to El Djem to the ruins of the coliseum built by the Romans, almost as big as the one in Rome. You can see it from ten miles away. German and Italian soldiers quartered there. El Djem is about 20 miles south of here on the road to Sfax. This road is called Messerschmitt Lane. About every hundred yards there is wreckage of every description and from every country. This evening the entire 62nd had to fall out in Class A uniform. Those who made the invasion were given ribbons. Seven fellows passed out from the heat. A sirocco blew all day, hot wind off the desert.

➤ July 23

Saw my friend Sgt. Reynolds from the 2nd British Paratroop Brigade. He had just come back from Sicily. He jumped on invasion night and his outfit captured and held the bridge at Syracuse. He said over half of his men were killed. Some jumped on machine gun nests. Four planeloads are still missing.

➤ July 28

The water situation is sure getting bad, none to wash in and not much to drink. The medics came around and weighed everybody. I've lost 25 pounds and losing more every day.

➤ July 31

Costa and Caton sneaked out to Djemal and they're not back yet. Butz, Hitchcock, Glasby, Homer and I bought two quarts of gin that Russo brought back from Cairo. Got gassed up. Perrini got a truck out of the motor pool and we all went over to Djemal and met Caton and Russo over there. They were full of vermouth and anisette. Got back at midnight and we were over the hill, AWOL.

➤ August 3

My birthday today. I wonder where I'll be the next one. Glider training is on full blast again. Heard awhile ago that I've been promoted to Staff Sergeant with full flying pay. Not a bad birthday present, as it will amount to around \$170 a month. Got a letter from my mother.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 - North Africa and Sicily

➤ August 10

Flew up to Mateur and picked up 59 packsaddles for horses that have mounts for machine guns. We left the coast at Tunis and hedgehopped all the way over to Palermo, Sicily, about 200 feet off the water. Had a P-38 fighter escort. Palermo is a large city, blown all to pieces. Sicily is extremely mountainous, high rugged mountains.

➤ August 20

Went swimming at Sousse, got stung by a jellyfish. Bought a melon from an Arab with a two-wheeled cart and as counterweights to offset the watermelons, he used thrust bearings and two land mines. Had pie for supper.

➤ August 24

Went out tonight on a practice invasion flight. It was the largest formation yet to pull a practice raid. Several hundred altogether and all towed gliders loaded with American airborne and all of their equipment, guns, grenades, bombs, mortars and there was a Jeep in nearly all of them. We took off at 5 PM and flew across the Mediterranean, then north nearly to Pantelleria, then back here. Not a glider cracked up for a change.

➤ August 29

The wind is terrible. Sometimes you can't see because of blowing sand. My God, but it's terrible. Doesn't let up a bit. Jan Galous got a letter from his wife. She has left him for some draft dodger. He's taking it pretty hard. Caton, Costa and Russo are hitting the vin rouge pretty heavy.

➤ August 30

Got paid tonight. Drew \$165.30. Was paid in invasion money, American gold seal greenbacks.

➤ September 5

The entire 62nd took off this morning on a secret mission. They went to a field up near Tunis and picked up American paratroops and flew them to Sicily. The invasion of Italy, which was started day before yesterday, is hot. They have a 40-mile front now and are going like hell.

➤ September 6

Goodby Africa, hello Sicily. Was told this morning we had to move out right away, so I packed my stuff and here I am. This field in Sicily is pretty large, about five miles from Gela and the sea. Lots of wrecked German airplanes and bomb craters and barbwire entanglements. We got over here too late to set up the tents, so will sleep in the ship tonight.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 - Sicily

➤ September 7

Had a rough night last night. 56 enemy aircraft were reported five miles away and coming this way. We all got in a stone bomb shelter built by the Italians. The planes passed us by and bombed Catania. After things quieted down, the Sergeant in charge of our gun position brought out some wine. Tandy, the gun crew and I got gassed. Slept under the wing. Took off at 7:30 AM, flew back across the Mediterranean to Enfidaville, Tunisia, and picked up a load of Airborne Infantry. When we got back here I was put in charge of the maintenance crew.

➤ September 8

Godamighty, the Italians surrendered. This place is bedlam. Just heard at supper tonight. Six of our planes were going out tonight on combat missions and now they don't have to go. Talk about a happy bunch of boys.

➤ September 9

The American 1st Division, 17,000 men, has moved into all the landing fields around here. The Italians are supposed to bring all their airplanes here and park them, and the 1st Division is here to make sure they do it. Everything is tense. Everyone is waiting for the Italians to come in. This landing strip is called Ponte Olivia. Up on the hill in back of us is a graveyard, the fellows who died in this field, with over 1600 graves.

➤ September 11

This valley is sort of horseshoe shaped, with the open end towards the sea. No Italian planes have come in yet. No one knows why. We're certainly ready for them. Helped Peterson finish a 300-hour inspection on his ship 893, Hot Pokey.

➤ September 13

Two Italian bombers landed at the strip over the hill. The crew was so nervous; they could hardly stand up. After they found out they weren't going to get shot, they got drunk and have been plastered ever since.

➤ September 18

Had a shower last night, the first since April. It's made out of P-38 auxiliary gas tanks. The American 5th Army and British 8th have joined above Naples.

➤ September 20

Got a package from home with a camera. Homer, Caton and I went on an afternoon pass into Vittoria, about 25 miles away. Hundreds of German pill boxes on the hills around us. This is wine making season for the Sicilians and we must have passed 1500 two wheeled carts, pulled by donkeys, filled with grapes or fresh made wine in skin bags. Had a pretty good time in town. We ate some spaghetti and chicken while three kids played mandolins for us.

➤ November 21

Caton and Galous got in a fight in the club tonight. Ed went in and smoked out the place with a tommy gun. They are confined to quarters tonight.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1943 – Sicily** (continued)

➤ November 22

Costa, Mitchell and I rode bicycles most all day. Fine day. Went up the road and through a bunch of German pill boxes, took some pictures. Bought some grapes at a fruit market along the way. Got gassed up and fell off the bikes.

➤ November 23

Wallace and I developed three rolls of film this afternoon in a darkroom made out of a bomb shelter. Lewis flew to Foggia and was shot at by the US Navy.

➤ November 25

Took off at 8:00 AM and flew to Foggia. It's a regular beehive of B-25s. As fast as they come in, they are loaded with bombs and take right off again. The front is only a few miles away. Brought back three walking and one litter patient to Catania. Came back here and Tandy, England, Dave and I went to the mess hall and ate a whole turkey. Johnson came back from Cairo, where he saw Roosevelt, Stalin, and Mr. and Mrs. Chiang Kai-shek down there. Stalin came in on a C-54 with 50 P-47 escorts. Roosevelt's ship, a C-54, bore no insignia.

➤ December 6

Just came back from Bari. The Germans bombed it, killing 1400 people, 400 soldiers. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin are planning a meeting in Persia. Just had one in Cairo. Received a Christmas package from the Wheelers in Meridian, California.

➤ December 7

Two years of war.

➤ December 9

Took off at 7:30 AM. Flew to Palermo and picked up 20 walking patients and took them to Bizerte. Went down to Salomon Field, south of Tunis and picked up 7 fellows with a P-47 fighter outfit. Came back to Ponte Olivia. Costa came back last night and has been permanently grounded.

➤ December 10

Took off at 8:00 AM, one of the worst trips yet. As soon as we got off the ground, the weather closed in. Had to fly at 10,000 ft. to get over the clouds, but another layer was above us. Finally, the two layers zeroed in and caved in on us at the Gulf of Taranto. I had to fly gauges all the way to Foggia. The air was rough as hell. We unloaded and started back. Got about 25 minutes out of Foggia over the Adriatic, when a boat challenged us and took a pot shot at us through the clouds. If I had had a bomb on the racks, I'd have sunk their damn scow. The weather got worse, ceiling zero, visibility an eighth of a mile. Started to rain. The wings iced up. The engines lost manifold pressure. The rest of our flight formation was off the left wing somewhere. We were leading a flight of five. We tried skimming the water but were afraid of hitting a boat, so climbed through the soup up to 10,000 ft. At times I could barely see the wingtips. The navigator and radioman had to be on the ball. For 2 hours we couldn't see 100 feet ahead. We came in to land and Engle came in right behind us. The second ship blew a tire

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 – Sicily (continued)

on landing, spun around and went plowing off through the mud. 381 was also on the runway with a blown tire. Rough ride.

➤ December 11

Took off at 7:15 AM. Flew to Salomon Field, Tunisia, and picked up the last load of the 325th Fighter Squadron crew. Took off for Foggia. Flew up the west side of Italy to Salerno, then across Italy to Foggia. The beach at Salerno was strewn with wreckage of every description, and bodies of soldiers washed ashore. The tracks of 2 ½ ton amphibious trucks are all over the beach where they unloaded from the landing barges. Clouds covered the mountains across Italy and we had to fly through canyons.

➤ December 13

Flew to Oran. Was to pick up litter patients but the weather turned us in. Tandy, Rios, Lodge and I went to Tunis. Big time. Saw some of Rommels 2nd Panzers. They were just kids. Everything is very expensive.

➤ December 15

Loaded up with 18 amputation litter patients and took off at 8 AM. Nearly all of them had at least one leg off. The top of one fellow's head was gone and another fellow had gangrene. They were all British and I knew them at Algiers.

➤ December 17

Took off from Ponte Olivia at 8 AM and flew up to Foggia. Visibility over Sicily was zero. Captain Smith saw the mountain to the east just in time and shoved the throttles up in the kitchen. It took all 2400 horsepower to get us over the top, too. We finally got up over the soup at 9000 ft. We were leading a three-ship formation.

➤ December 24

Costa and I went to the club. Things were going good when we got there. Everybody is happy, it's Christmas Eve.

➤ December 25

Christmas Day. Had the day off. Everybody felt rough. Caton had a black eye. We had a good turkey dinner.

➤ December 30

Took off at 8 AM for Palermo. Had to climb to 4000 ft to get above the overcast. The right engine iced up and we caught it just in time. Loaded up with 4178 pounds of insect powder for the typhus at Naples. Mt. Vesuvius was blasting up a bunch of rocks and smoke.

➤ December 31

New Year's Eve. Took off at 9 AM with 16 litter patients. Three of the patients were French-Moroccan, whose feet were frozen off. The air was so rough some of the patients got deathly sick. Tools flew all over the ship. I looked for the wings to fold up. We were going to Bizerte, but had to turn back and land at Palermo. There was no attendant so I was

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1943 – Sicily (continued)

the nurse. Finally, the 56th Air Evacuation took off our patients. We got a pass and went to town. Tapped about 20 shots of vermouth. Met a couple of British soldiers from a rescue group, British Corvettes, a PT boat. Went down to the boat with them and had some Scotch and beer.

1944

➤ January 1

New Years. All anti-aircraft batteries and the guns on the boats in the harbor cut loose at midnight. Had a turkey dinner at the mess hall.

➤ January 2

Took off at 9:30 AM with 16 litter patients and a G.I. nurse. Just as we got off the ground we hit a sinker and Roger had to pull 48 inches of mercury to keep us out of some buildings.

➤ January 9

Took off at 8:00 AM for the Isle of Capri. Flew over snow-capped Mt. Etna and landed at Naples. Got on a ferryboat and left for Capri at 2 PM. We were given a room in a swanky hotel. All the beds had sheets. It was quite a sight, quite a treat. So we went to bed right after supper, which was served on tables with tablecloths. Also pretty waitresses.

➤ January 10

This afternoon, we got two kids to row us out to the Blue Grotto in a boat. Had to row in through a cave. The Grotto was the most beautiful blue-green inside, prettiest thing I ever saw. I'll never forget that place. Had some vino. Met a guy who could speak Spanish, so got along pretty good. Cato and I went to see a G.I. orchestra tonight. The place where the orchestra played had dazzling marble pillars, inlaid stone floors, gold filigree on the ceiling, potted palm trees and was really beautiful. The whole island is beautiful. We got the message that I am sent here for a rest. This is the 12th Air Force rest camp. I get a week. This is the second day of my seven days.

➤ January 12

Went for a walk and was taken to an ancient monastery by a priest. It was beautiful inside, lots of priceless paintings. Saw where the monks were kept. It was built in 1300. Saw Mussolini's summer home. Some shack.

➤ January 14

Archie and I walked up to Tiberius Castle. Saw where the prisoners were thrown into the sea. The castle was built 85 years before Christ and has 300 rooms. Came back and got gassed up in a little vino grotto.

➤ January 15

Went over to the Red Cross lounge tonight, a very nice place. The girls, hostesses, were all bags. This is their last boat

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Sicily** (continued)

➤ January 18

Went back to Naples and hitchhiked a ride on a transport to Palermo. It was about 2000 pounds overweight and hit some very rough air east of Vesuvius. I sure sweated it out for about 15 minutes. Landed at Palermo and caught a ride back over here on 89. Found quite a few changes. Four guys are going home. Received a big welcome when I came back, visitors all evening. Also, 21 letters from home.

➤ January 20

Completed a 25-hour inspection on 203. Went down and visited Glasby, Hitchie, and Homer Johnson tonight.

➤ January 23

Major Ben Whatley is definitely missing. He had been flying over Yugoslavia, dropping supplies. He was our commanding officer when I first went into the service back at McClellan Field, a real fine fellow.

➤ January 24

Major Smith brought an orphan kid back from Africa. He is 14 years old, Spanish, and can speak several languages. They gave him a uniform and he sure is proud of it. His name is Carlos.

➤ January 25

Took off at 9 AM on a training flight with a student pilot just over from the States. It was only his second flight in a two-engine plane. I could feel the gray hairs popping out all over my head. He was just a kid, scared to death. Bigham had a rough time with him. On one landing I saved our hide by getting the wheels down and locked just as we hit the runway. Three new replacements came in today, bringing ships over from the States.

➤ January 26

Took off on a transition flight to Malta and around the Mediterranean, blind flying. The new pilot couldn't fly straight or level. Lots of ships in the air. Two ships of the 314th Squadron collided in midair. The crew of one ship was killed. Brought in a new radar Pathfinder ship today.

➤ February 4

Took off at 7 AM with 16 replacements, took them to Taranto, then over to Naples. There was a heavy overcast and we went up to 16,000 ft. to stay over it. I couldn't get my breath and my eyes felt like they were going to pop out of my head. My heart pounded and I could taste blood in my mouth. The pilot had oxygen, but I didn't. Taylor called in to find out if we were over the Tyrrhenian Sea and when told we were, started to let down through the overcast. The wings iced up, the props iced up, and the windshield did, too. The inside of the airplane was frosted over with the heater on full blast. When we got below the overcast, we dropped right down over Salerno Beach. A few miles further north and we would have smacked into Mt. Vesuvius. Came in to land in pouring rain. 330 came in behind us. They went under the overcast across Italy. I guess it was a hell of a trip for them. They had to fly through canyons, where they

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Sicily and Italy

hit a sinker and Archie Wallace hit the top so hard he was unconscious for half an hour. Cut his lip and nose and blacked an eye. Randy tried to crawl back and get him, but the air was so rough he couldn't make it. Hell tonight.

➤ February 5

Took off at 10:30 AM and went over to Sircola Field. It was hailing hard. Picked up 13 fellows of the 32nd Fighter Group. At times there was no upside down. Went up to 14,000 ft. but some of the guys were starting to pass out, so we had to come back down. Tried to land at Palermo but there was a 45 mph crosswind and we nearly cracked up going through the pass. Came out over town, barely missing the rooftops and barrage balloons. All thirteen passengers got sick, including three P-40 pilots. They vomited all over the ship.

➤ February 6

Took off at 9 AM. Rain and wind blew a hurricane. Went up to Pomigliano with 3500 lbs. of mail. Unloaded and went over to Sircola, where Major Smith tore a hole in the left aileron on a post. Capt. Calder taxied his airplane into a tree. Picked up eleven more of the 32nd Fighter Group and took off. The air was very rough but only one guy got sick.

➤ February 10

We are getting ready to move again. Don't know where we're going. After being threatened by the Germans, I finally got a box of stuff and sent it home to Mother.

➤ February 12

Took off at 9 AM in the rain and moved up here to Brindisi. The 7th Squadron came up also. A few from each squadron were left behind to clean things up. This is a pretty nice field. The runway starts at the beach. The British are here with Lancasters and Halifaxes. They've been flying stuff over to Albania and Yugoslavia. We are being lined up to take over from the RAF. Bunce and I got pickled in a vino grotto in the back of the British mess hall.

➤ February 15

Installed bomb racks in the ship. There was no place to get lunch so had to go to bed. The British flew over to Yugoslavia last night and dropped supplies to the guerillas back in the mountains. They got shot at plenty.

➤ February 16

Installed rollers in 203 to roll supplies out the door. Loaded 4300 lbs. of explosives, including six containers. Tandy is going out at 1 AM tonight leading a flight of four airplanes to drop supplies back in the mountains of Yugoslavia for Tito's boys.

➤ February 17

Last night's mission called off on account of weather. Went over to the Ritz-Carlton tonight and got gassed up. The Ritz-Carlton is really something. It's in some kind of chicken coop. Fellow has about a 500-gallon barrel of wine in there and it's all spilled on the floor, dirt, mud and filth everywhere, but as far as we're concerned it's the Ritz.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy

➤ February 24

Roger Farris took 4000 lbs. of propaganda out and dropped it over Greece last night. He was up at 15,000 ft. for three hours without oxygen. He got shot at, too.

➤ February 25

Tandy came in about 1 AM. Went up to Bulgaria and was only 40 miles from Belgrade, which was the target area but was socked in. Could see the fire marker through the clouds but couldn't get down to it so he brought the load back. One of the Halifaxes didn't come back last night. Another cracked up on the runway.

➤ March 5

The stew we had last night gave some of us food poisoning. I was very sick, felt bad all day. Heard that my friend Johnny Arth was killed in a crash in Sicily, with a rookie pilot, a load of litter patients and two nurses aboard. Hit a mountain.

➤ March 7

At 11:30 tonight took off on my first raid over enemy territory in Greece. Had to climb to 18,000 ft. to get over a bad storm over the Adriatic. Our target was in a small valley between two snowbound mountains. The Greek guerillas had a marker fire but gave us no signals to come in. We circled until we ran out of gas in two tanks. Headed due west again, back over Greece, and half way across could see a circle of about 8 fires. Then we got the signal and came in. Circled once then I took off the door. I had a British Airborne dispatcher with me. We started throwing out bundles of food and clothing. We had to make five runs over the target to empty it all out. Some went out on parachutes and some didn't. We unloaded by 3 AM and lit out for home. Out over the Adriatic, we hit a storm and it was like putting on the brakes. It was pitch dark and we were scared stiff. Lightning was striking all around and lit up the inside of the ship. The radio went out and the magnetic compass was flying around in every direction. Had no idea if we were up or down or where we were. We talked about whether to let down and try to land in the water. Then, in the darkness, a sliver of light appeared off to the right. It was all we had, so we headed for it and stayed with it and when we finally broke out of the storm, we were at the end of our own runway. We never knew what the light was.

➤ March 8

Heard our target last night was knocked out by an enemy night fighter.

➤ March 9

Got gassed up at the paisans. The Germans pushed the Americans back at the Anzio beachhead north of Rome.

➤ March 10

Was called into Engineering this morning. All Crew Chiefs' names were put in a hat. Three names were taken out and would go on detached service to England. It could be a transfer. My name was the first one drawn. Rocky Sessions, a friend of mine, wanted the job worse than I did and offered me 100 dollars to trade places. So I sold out. He has a girl in England. A new

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

ship was transferred into the Squadron. We now have a Cub, two B-25s and a B-17 with gun crews attached to it.

➤ March 13

Loaded my ship this morning and took on one British paratrooper saboteur. All I had aboard was him and the dispatcher, plus four containers. At the briefing, we were told we were to drop our man far behind the lines in northeastern Yugoslavia. The guerillas there had command of only a five-mile radius from the target zone. We started out and flew diagonally across Yugoslavia. A 40-mph crosswind forced us off our course, then the navigator found we were over Romania. Occasionally, in the north I could see tracers coming our way but they fell short. Finally found the target, which was only a few miles from the Romanian border. The guerillas had a large V of 12 flares in a valley in the mountains and gave us the correct signal. I took off the door and the paratrooper jumped. He was about 20 years old and trained for this. He was British but had lived in Yugoslavia and could read, write and speak the language. His mission must have been pretty important, to justify using one ship and its crew to fly him alone over there. I found out later his mission was to blow up a bridge and he was successful.

➤ March 17

Costa and I came home AWOL and found out I was made Tech. Sergeant and was the Crew Chief on the new Pathfinder radar plane, the only one in the 62nd Group. We call it the Ruptured Duck.

➤ March 18

Took off at 1 AM this morning in my new ship. Flew to about 45 miles south of Belgrade. We found our target and dropped our load. This radar stuff is sure hot; we hit the target right on the nose. Searchlights tried to pick us up but missed a mile.

➤ March 19

Six ships are going across tonight with native Yugoslav paratroop guerillas. They are a rough looking bunch of fellows and wear British uniforms with a red star on their cap. Some are quite old. I don't know how in the hell they got over here. Lester Wrigley is my 1st asst. and Joe Stretcher is my 2nd asst. My ship, filled with new radar equipment, is the only one with a 24-hour guard.

➤ March 23

Drew my Balkan escape kit and took off at 8 PM last night. My ship and the 8th Squadron radar ship were sent to a rough target 90 miles inland in northern Yugoslavia, with 39 packages on parachutes. We found our target area but no signal and the second time there was still no signal. The target was supposed to be a large Z of nine fires in the snow and the flashlight signal of N, and we were to signal back with an O. The fires we saw were either a G or C with no flashlight signal. It finally dawned on us the Germans had captured our target area and were laying out the fires to decoy us in. We started to get out of there, when all hell broke loose. I was in the cabin looking out the door, when I saw a horribly beautiful sight. They were shooting and the tracers came at us in a beautiful orange, crimson arc. My blood froze. I was standing at the

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy and Sicily

open door, ready to jump. Had they been using anti-aircraft guns instead of 20mm, we would still be in the Balkans. Jonesy had the throttles up in the kitchen and we hauled back on the props to 2400 and got out of there, with a mountain to clear. The ship was doing everything she could and we were right on top of the trees. Started up this canyon where German troops were on the road and they started shooting at us with machine guns. We got just to the crest of the hill and the plane started to stall out, to vibrate, and the airspeed was down below 90. Couldn't have gone much further, when we finally cleared the top of the hill. Left the throttles and props where they were, wide open, and in a few minutes that old C-47 must have been going over 200 miles an hour. Passed over some little town south of Belgrade that was all lit up. Sure was good to see lights again.

➤ March 24

Mt. Vesuvius is blowing up and volcanic ash is all over everything way down here about 200 miles. Heard today we are moving back to Ponte Olivia in Sicily.

➤ March 27

Loaded up with baggage and fourteen men of the 51st Squadron, including three cooks and some Italian prisoners. Had a big load. Jonesy took off into the wind on a short runway and had to pull 48 inches of mercury to clear it. Rough trip. Landed at Ponte Olivia at Gela and unloaded.

➤ March 28

Moved back into my same spot, the engineering shack. Seems like coming back home. Perrini and I went into Gela tonight for awhile. Had a pretty good time, too.

➤ March 29

Took off at 7 AM and flew over to Catania. Some specialists started working on the radar equipment. Everyone went to town. Wrigley and I stayed all night in the Albergo Belvedere.

➤ March 30

Drizzling rain. The radar men worked all day. I saw Eddie Plasik. He was court-martialed and transferred out of the 4th Squadron into the 51st Wing and he had a black eye. He was also drunk as a hoot owl, but that was nothing new. I never saw him sober.

➤ March 31

Slept in the ship last night. The radar men finished. Came back over here to Ponte Olivia. Jonesy brought back several cases of liquor for the officers. Lt. Cooney was pickled and I mean he was really soused. What a good navigator he made.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Sicily

➤ April 1

Last night just before I went to bed I heard some shots in rapid fire. One of the new men shot a guy who came into his tent. The corpse is a 17-year-old Sicilian who crept into the tent with a companion and was stealing blankets. One fellow got away. Flew over to Catania, where I saw Russo, He has been on detached service in Sardinia. One of his engines went out coming down from Naples with 21 passengers. Nearly had to make a water landing, but instead flew on one engine for an hour and 45 minutes.

➤ April 2

Wrigley took the ship out to swing the compass. The Air Echelon of the 4th Squadron is going to India. Rumors are flying around thick and fast.

➤ April 3

Took off this morning on a Pathfinder check flight, using both the radar and Rebecca sets. Works pretty good, too. Sold two cartons of cigarettes at the black market for 14 dollars.

➤ April 6

Took off at 9 AM on a practice flight. Four British paratroopers were going to jump but we didn't get the target beacon. We kept flying right back over the airport, then would lose the beacon. Come to find out, the radar ground crew had taken the ground set back to the airport to repair it and we followed it right up to the hangar every time.

➤ April 9

Easter Sunday.

➤ April 12

Worked all day cleaning up the ship for a big inspection tomorrow. General Devers and General Aker are supposed to be here. Had about 20 men with water and rags go all over my ship.

➤ April 13

The big day, the Generals and staff arrived. The 8th Squadron dropped paratroopers and towed a glider, which came down with a parachute. The 7th Squadron had an area evacuation ship fixed up with litters and a nurse. My ship, the radar ship, was on display. We had to stand at attention. Everything was very formal. After the ceremony was over, the Generals accepted an invitation from Col. Manning to ride back to Catania on my ship to see how the radar worked. We took off and flew along the coastline to let them look through the radarscope. They must have been wearing 50 ribbons apiece, besides Command Pilot's wings. When we landed, a red flag with three white stars was displayed, indicating at least one three star general aboard. There were newsreel cameras, flash cameras, and MPs everywhere. A big deal.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Sicily and Italy

➤ April 15

Mt. Vesuvius has been blowing up and lava is flowing down its sides. I saw a house half covered with lava. The whole mountain is gray from the volcanic ash.

➤ April 22

Wrigley took 20 fellows to Naples who are going home. Major Smith came into the shack tonight to say goodbye. He is going home tomorrow. Some people have all the luck.

➤ April 23

Went to Catania for a radar overhaul. Went into town with the 51st Wing fellows and got a room at the Albergo Belvedere.

➤ April 24

Got up at 6 this morning and walked nearly all the way out to the airport. Took off at 9 AM and came back home. Costa is the fifth man on my crew now. Was given two pictures taken the day we flew the Generals. The whole squadron had to go to a movie tonight on venereal diseases and malaria.

➤ April 26

Costa and I sent a money order to Major Smith at Pope Field for a set of pictures he took over here and had them sent home to our folks.

➤ April 29

Roger Farris is so excited he can hardly talk. He was informed awhile ago that he was going home on a 90-day furlough. Frank Bowman was told that Capt. Rinehardt was going to transfer out of the Squadron. Bowman has been drunk for three days and this afternoon was going to shoot himself but backed out.

➤ May 1

Major Gibson came back from Casablanca in the B-25 and brought 15 cases of Coca Cola. The 51st Club opened tonight. I had some rum and two bottles of Coke, that was my allowance. There have been several fights at the Club tonight. Poor old Cogman came over to help open the club and we had to put him to bed.

➤ May 6

Everything is in a hubbub. We are moving again. Loaded my plane with Squadron supply tents and stuff. Everybody is packing. I sure hate this moving. We are going up to Salerno. The place here already looks deserted.

➤ May 8

Got here this morning with a heavy load of Squadron supplies and all our personal equipment. The commanding officer here, Major Gibson, gave us a talk. He said we were due to get some rough missions out of this place. It's pretty warm here, but a nice breeze is coming off Salerno Beach. Tall mustard and other wild flowers are all over the field. Right now it's 11 AM and I'm sitting on a life raft in the back of my ship with both doors open. I'm waiting for the

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy

armed guard to come and relieve me so I can go eat. The 7th, 8th, and 51st ships are coming in, one after the other, this morning. We moved into a big three-story building, a tobacco factory. The outside walls are all vine covered. It's the first decent place we've had to stay, but it was too good to last. All the crew chiefs were ordered to sleep in their planes. So I moved my bed back out on the ship. The crew chiefs are burned up about it, too.

➤ May 9

Tonight Costa, Stretcher and I went down to Paestum, just a little ways south of the field, met Russo and Shed. Drank some Dago Red. Walked home in the dark and were challenged about a hundred times by the guards.

➤ May 13

The Club opened tonight on the ground floor of the tobacco factory. Boy, what a deal that was. Perrini and I went over for awhile and watched the games. Those fellows were playing poker for blood. Money meant nothing to them

➤ May 14

God, what a day. At 4:30 this morning the Germans bombed Naples. The concussion shook my airplane so badly it woke me up and Naples is 60 miles away. I'm trying to block from my memory what happened this afternoon. The 7th, 8th, and 51st Squadrons took off on another invasion dry run. This is the first time my ship hasn't been called out. They are saving it because of the radar. The formation had completed its mission and was just coming in, when one of the 7th Squadron ships blew up in midair. Costa and I were working in the cockpit of my airplane and saw it all. One ship blew up and knocked two others down with it. One ship came straight down; the other two were on fire in the air. The explosions were terrific. They all burned up. God, what a mess. They were at about 1000 ft. and the main part of the wreckage was only about 200 yards from Salerno Beach. Engines were buried in the ground. It was hard to tell which were falling pieces and which were ships landing. I waited til evening to go out and look at the wreckage. I thought the bodies were taken away, but when I got there I could recognize Sgt. Sorenson, a fellow crew chief. My friend Lt. Col. Hearn got it in a 7th Squadron ship. Hearn was with us all the way from Sacramento, a real, real fine fellow. One body was cut in half, the head and legs off another, and body parts were a mile around. Tonight Frank Russo and I went over to an Italian family's house to drown our sorrow. While we were having dinner, the Germans bombed Salerno, 24 miles away. The concussion made the windows rattle. That's when Frank and I got good and gassed. Walked on over to my airplane and was halted by the guard, who threatened to shoot me. Everybody is nervous and jittery as hell tonight.

➤ May 16

The Squadron dropped the 401st Paratroop Battalion this afternoon in a practice dry run. I didn't go because I can't carry containers on the belly of my ship because of the radar bulb. The paratroopers were all American, the first we have dropped, all the rest have been British. They camouflaged their faces with gray and green paint, making them look gruesome.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ May 18

Pulled a 25 hour on my ship and mopped the inside. Blood and everything else was on the floor. A bunch of new replacements came, just kids looking bewildered.

➤ May 19

We were issued flying armored suits, or flak vests. Turned in my Springfield and was issued a new carbine, a nice little gun. Lester said that Major Johnson is going to marry that screwball Area Evacuation nurse. Boy, is she a screwball.

➤ May 22

Col. Manning and a bunch of big shots were here and they are going to drop one load of paratroopers behind the lines up at Anzio. They are going in on radar and two Captains volunteered to fly. My ship is under repair so they took the 8th Squadron radar plane. They have to wear flak suits because they are to drop the paratroops in a spot where they can watch German front line troop movements from behind. Then they are to wireless back here. High risk.

➤ May 25

A USO show with Peggy Joyce came through and played at 2 PM in the tobacco factory. Everybody was excused from work to go see it. I watched part of it but it was so bad, I felt embarrassed for them and left. Felix and I walked into Paestum tonight and drank a glass of Red Death and came home.

➤ May 26

Took off at 8 AM and went to Anzio to pick up patients. Saw an enemy submarine under the surface out in the Tyrrhenian Sea. Allied heavy artillery was firing in a continuous roar and the concussion rocked my ship on the ground. Anzio is only 15 minutes from Rome. The front lines are only 3 miles away. We were the first evacuation plane up there and the fellows we loaded on were just hauled in off the battlefield and were a gory mess. Newsreel cameras were grinding everywhere. Joe Stretcher and I had to pose for them. We had eighteen litter patients and three walking patients. One of the walking was a German, who had operated a pillbox on the highway and held up the Allied advance all by himself. Finally was shot through the jaw by an American sniper. The other two walkers wanted to throw him out, but the nurse wouldn't let them.

➤ May 28

Went up to Pomigliano. Picked up a nurse, 18 litter and 3 walking patients and took them to Anzio. Loaded 13 American litter and 7 British walking and took them back to Pomigliano. On our second trip the tower warned all aircraft that two enemy planes were approaching at 13,000 ft. We took off anyway and sneaked out over the sea at 50-ft. altitude. This evening the dull rumbling of the heavy guns was terrific. It could be felt more than heard. Jerry started to counter attack this morning, so we will probably have a lot of patients. Two of the patients today were burned by flame-throwers, only a hole for a mouth, burned to a crisp. Others were minus arms, legs, eyes and everything else. God, it's awful, it is a hell of a mess. Nine planes evacuated nearly 420 patients today, 420 yesterday and 400 the day before.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

➤ May 29

I went on pass and visited Pompeii. Nearly wore myself out, looking around. It's really something to see.

➤ May 30

Had the name Ruptured Duck painted on the side of my airplane. Saboteurs blew up two airplanes on a strip north of here and cut the parachute static line on another. Also laid land mines in front of the wheels of others. The guard was doubled last night and tonight 72 men are on guard. Everyone has to be armed after 7 PM with orders to kill any civilian they see. Since I sleep in my ship, I have to have my carbine loaded and beside me all night. Everybody's jumpy.

➤ June 2

Went up to Anzio and hauled four loads of litter patients to Naples. One walking patient was a German with the Herman Goering Division, shot through the arm. Wrigley thinks we have finished carrying patients. We have evacuated about 5,000 this last week.

➤ June 4

Took off at 7, went to Naples and picked up a nurse and pill roller and a bunch of Italian civilians, women, kids and old men. I thought we were all through flying patients, but the medics up at the front tell me there is a steady stream of casualties coming in. Spitfires off the Nettuno strip were ground strafing troops and trains all day. The German patients I hauled today were not over 18.

➤ June 6

This is D-Day. The Allies launched the invasion in northern France at 7:30 this morning. This is a real rough one, the Normandy invasion.

➤ June 7

The radio has been full of the invasion of France. The Troop Carrier Command dropped 30,000 paratroopers just before the invasion started. If I had not given Rocky Sessions my transfer to England, I would have been in on it.

➤ Jun 9

Our ships dropped French paratroopers at 3 this morning and killed a couple.

➤ June 10

There must be at least 500 American paratroopers here; all of them have been wounded. Must be a 1000 or 1500 French paratroopers here also, all anxious to jump in France.

➤ June 12

Took off at 7 AM, flew two loads of patients from Anzio to Naples. Flew over Cassino today. The town is all blown to hell, and the old Abbey is torn to pieces, too.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ June 13

A lot of replacements came in today, a bunch of poor bewildered bastards.

➤ June 14

Went up above Rome about 35 miles and picked up a load of patients. There were 32 aboard coming back, including a captured German Major, a rugged ass guy. His clothes had patches and the patches had patches. He could speak good English, too. Flew low over the middle of Rome, a very large city.

➤ June 16

Took off this evening with 13 British paratroops, 73 plane formation. This was a rough one. McIntosh was flying and he was worn out. Perrini went along with me just for the ride. It's the first time he'd ever seen paratroopers go out and he got pretty excited. It took about 5 seconds for them to jump.

➤ June 17

Flew three loads of patients from Nettuno to Naples. Quite a few were German. Two were Luftwaffe paratroopers. An A-20 crashed on a strip south of Anzio. It had 4,000 pounds of bombs aboard. Blew the whole end off the runway. Tired tonight.

➤ June 20

Something poisoned me last night, sick to my stomach and have a headache. Turned into the pill roller this morning and he gave me five big white pills. I feel better but like I've been beat up. Stayed in bed all day. The food is absolutely rotten now.

➤ June 22

Installed a new tire and tube on my plane. Homer and I walked down to Pasteum this evening and our laundry wasn't done yet, so we drank a bottle vino.

➤ June 23

This afternoon I turned in my new carbine for a 45-caliber pistol. Wrigley and I went over to the beach and shot 80 rounds of ammunition at a sunken landing barge.

➤ June 24

Wrigley took the ship out on the meat run today. Lt. Anderson told me we have to move to Rome and be set up in three days. I guess we start in the morning. Sure hate to be moving again.

➤ June 25

We took 22 walking British patients to Naples. Lt. Hahn was drowned at the beach this afternoon. Got caught in an undertow, or something. Tonight Homer, Glasby, Lodge, Liberty and I went down to Pasteum in a Jeep after our laundry. Nearly got in a street fight. Instead, went over to the 7th Squadron bar.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

➤ June 26

Joe Stretcher and I watched some British geologists digging up bones from the tombs across the road. They say the bones are over 2000 years old. I salvaged a bunch of teeth out of there. I went down in those tombs and walked around. The only light I had was a cigarette lighter and it was pretty spooky down there. This evening Homer, Glasby, Hitchcock and I went down to Pasteum in a Jeep. Ate a lettuce salad the size of a shock of hay at my laundry woman's house and drank a quart of vino.

➤ June 28

We are moving out. Nearly all the tents are down today.

➤ June 29

Took off from Salerno at 7:30 AM and the whole Squadron moved up here to Galeria, about 10 miles west of Rome. Unloaded and went on the meat run. Hauled two loads of Hindus from Guidonia, east of Rome, to Naples.

➤ June 30

Went bathing after dinner in a little stream that runs past the mess hall and into the Tiber River. Some of the fellows who were here first went over to a wrecked train and got three brand new Italian machine guns and set them up. They have to find some Italian ammunition before they can shoot 'em. Jonesy got a Jeep and took two nurses over to Lido de Roma, a resort on the sea where the Wing headquarters is. The climate is really nice here now. A year ago we were in hell in Tunisia. The 5th Army is on the outskirts of Florence, so we might not stay here very long.

➤ July 4

Fourth of July. Went on pass into Rome. Nearly walked my legs off. Saw the balcony where Mussolini made his speeches, the Coliseum, the Vatican and much more. The town is so large, I tried to see too much and am worn out tonight. Rome and the surrounding territory remind me of Marin County, California.

➤ July 6

Costa came over today with a flight officer glider pilot in a weapon's carrier. First time I'd seen him for quite awhile. He is Line Chief on a bunch of L-5's.

➤ July 9

Went over to Viterbo and loaded one British and two German litter patients. These fellows were in real bad condition. One of the Germans left a lot of pictures in a wallet on my ship. That poor boy, I don't think he was over 16 years old.

➤ July 11

The officers had a dance last night, hangovers today. Took my laundry to a farmhouse about three miles west of here. Met an old fellow who spent 15 years in South America and spoke Spanish. He told me of the Germans stealing all their chickens and pigs. I have to go out on a night transition formation flight at 2400 hours. I sure dread it. I don't like those transition flights at night.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ July 12

God, what a rough 2 hours I put in last night. We took off at midnight. The moon wasn't up yet and the sky was mottled with clouds. We had to fly formation. We were to follow M-193 and at takeoff had to go like hell to catch him. We were about 400 yards behind him, when he went into a cloud. Just as we broke through the clouds, we saw him only about 20 or 30 feet ahead of us. Sanders hauled back on the throttle and dove under him. From there on, it was a nightmare. The formation got lost from each other. All the airplanes were flicking their lights on and off and zipping in and out of the clouds. When we came down all crews were shaking, all scared to death. Langham got so scared he couldn't talk. The pilots and I weren't much better.

➤ July 13

Some of the fellows we brought back from Falonica, some of them were Japanese and they were from that 100th Mountain outfit that the Japanese had over here. Enemy planes were behind us on our way back from our first load. Spitfires took off from Falonica and chased them away.

➤ July 14

Wrigley took the ship to Catania and brought back a load of liquor for all squadrons. The Italian prisoner KPs were taken away yesterday at 4 PM. They are going to be thrown back into the Italian army and they sure hate to think about it. They were good fellows and darn good cooks, too.

➤ July 17

Took off at 9:30 and went to Rosia, up at the front. When we got there, we got a call that a German patrol was overhead and to land immediately, which we did. Also found a foxhole in a hurry.

➤ July 19

Took off at 7, flew the corridor from here to Sardinia and on down to Talergma, Africa. Picked up 9 Frenchmen from a B-26 Group and took them to Sardinia. Unloaded and flew to Cagliari for chow. Davis got us each a bottle of hot beer at the PX. Took off and went back down to Africa. Jonesy flew at 10,000 ft. to cool our beer. Africa sure looked familiar. A whole herd of camels was inside the landing strip. Grasshoppers nearly broke the windshield and it was hot as hell. In fact, it was 122.

➤ July 21

Heard over the radio that someone tried to blow up Hitler. The boys in Normandy are giving them hell. The Russians are at the border of East Prussia. The 5th Army has taken Leghorn and is only 5 miles from Florence. Don't see how the war can last much longer.

➤ July 23

A lot of C-47s that invaded Normandy are arriving here. They still have three white stripes on the bottom of their wings and under the fuselage. Just something to keep our own Navy from shooting them down, like they did on the Sicilian invasion. All of our missions have been called off. We are getting ready for a hot one someplace.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ July 26

I had to write my autobiography of overseas duty tonight to be sent to the 12th Air Force Headquarters. Got a box of cigars from Dick today.

➤ July 28

Some of the Normandy invasion planes are attached to us. We have never seen such a concentration of C-47s and Airborne. The moon is about one quarter now.

➤ July 31

This has been a hectic day. Had to fix the escape hatches so the door would come completely off instead of swinging. All identification has been taken off my plane. Tonight Captain Powers gave all combat crews a briefing on what to do in case of a crash landing, force down, or capture by the Germans. Our escape kits will have Italian and French money amounting to 43 dollars, also food concentrates. He also told us what to do with our parachutes after we bail out and where and how to hide. And the procedure to get in touch with the French underground and, if downed in Germany, how to act in the hands of the Gestapo. Don't know where we are going, but I think we are going to crack the Gothic line up above Pisa. Even German Midge on the radio says, "We know you boys are in the Rome area training. We'll be waiting for you." I am giving these two books to my friend, Chris Perrini, to take home to Mother in case I do not come back. Chris works in the Motor Pool and his chances of getting back are real good. It won't be long, because the moon is nearly full.

➤ August 3

Still waiting, but all of us are nearly crazy. I begged off on my birthday and went to Rome but was so jittery I came home at noon.

➤ August 7

Our raid on the Gothic Line was called off. We were all keyed up for it and set to go. Two days later we were briefed on a raid to the Po River Valley on the Adriatic side near Venice. We got all set and waited til 4 o'clock and it was called off. Every combat crew is jittery. We have been practicing formation, radar and Rebecca flights, most of them at night. My ship has been painted with invasion stripes. The fellows have aged 10 years from the strain of waiting. The way the Russians and Americans in France are going, the war shouldn't last too much longer.

➤ August 10

Waited again all day. My nerves are about shot. Three fellows are under doctor's care. Bill Becky of the 8th Squadron sat down and cried like a baby and couldn't explain why.

➤ August 11

All Squadrons lined up at 1600 and were to take off at 2 o'clock in the morning. We thought the big show was tonight for sure. Everybody was nervous, but it seemed like a load had been lifted. We were more or less happy. At 1730, Dixon came around in a Jeep and told us it was called off again. We taxied back and now I've got the jitters so bad I can hardly write. Some of the guys have sneaked off to town to get drunk. I'm going into the bar and down a couple of belts myself. Good God, I wish something would break.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

➤ August 13

Heavy bombers have been going over all day headed for Southern France. I think tomorrow night we will invade. My radar guard, Walt Jensen, went crazy today and was taken away. My radar mechanic, Kaplan, he went crazy about a week ago. I wonder who's next.

➤ August 14

It looks like this is it. It is now noon. It's in the air. Fellows come around and look at you like you won't see them again. We haven't been briefed yet, but I think we are going to invade Southern France between Nice and Marseilles. I think my ship will lead and drop the Rebecca set for the others to come in on. General Eisenhower gave an order of the day and said this will be the most glorious and victorious week in history. Sure as hell didn't help that lump in the pit of my stomach.

➤ August 15

It is the Allied invasion of Southern France, Operation Dragoon. We were briefed at 6 PM last night and had life raft drill. We were allowed in the Squadron bar, and stayed there until 11 o'clock. Drew coffee and sandwiches at the mess hall. While we were in the bar, two German spies dressed as nuns were captured. At 2 AM we started taking off. I had 18 Commandos, British paratroopers, a rugged looking lot and just as tough. Their Major said to me, "If a man won't jump, shoot him. Everyone must leave the plane." Of course, the paratroopers heard this and they were already half shot and half crazy. One fellow did away with a half quart of Black and White Scotch, left the bottle on board, and we had a big time with that on the way back to Rome. From Corsica to Cannes, marker boats on the water were leading the flights in on my Rebecca sets. There was a slight fog over the water and only occasionally could I see the boats below, although there seemed to be a million of them. The Navy had orders not to shoot at any aircraft. Thank God, or it would have been another Sicily screw-up. We entered France a few miles west of Cannes at 2100 feet. It was a perfect night, black as the ace of spades and fog covered the ground. Jerry couldn't see us. Mustangs, Thunderbolts, and P-38s filled the air above as fighter escorts. I put on my flak vest and helmet. I was scared stiff but nothing happened. The Rebecca guided us about 18 miles northwest of Cannes and I jumped my paratroops. The ground could not be seen below the fog. Just before entering France, my paratroopers started praying, singing, yelling and screaming, all of which didn't help my nerves a bit. I was in a cold sweat. I felt like a living dead man. As we didn't get any flak on the coast, I thought we were flying into a trap. The drop was a few miles north of Toulon. The troops had so much stuff on them, they could hardly get out of the door. One fellow balked and I kicked him out and had to throw another one out. We turned to the right and started back. A searchlight tried to pick us up. I saw a blur as a Mustang dove on it. There were two explosions and then there were no more searchlights. A short burst of flak exploded behind and to the right of us. We were nearing the coast when I saw tracers going between us and Peck's ship, off my left wing. There were several more explosions on the ground, as we were shot at by a barrage of light gun ground fire. Two B-17s circling overhead put a stop to that with a few bombs. As we left the coastline, it was getting daylight and here came wave after wave of C-47s pulling gliders. It was a thrilling thing to be a part of a team like that. They passed 1000 ft under us. One of the glider ropes broke and the glider went into the sea behind them. Then came fighters and medium bombers. This was the most orderly and best timed formation I was ever in. We were to drop troops at 5 o'clock in

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

the morning and it was two minutes past 5 when we did. We flew from Rome clear up to Southern France and missed by only two minutes. After we landed, the pill roller gave us all a shot of whiskey. At 4 PM, 12 of our planes took off again with gliders loaded with combat engineers' equipment, bulldozers, Jeeps and so forth. My radar airplane does not tow gliders, so did not go. They came back and said our first assault of paratroopers had taken and cleared a field of Germans, and the gliders had a good safe open field to land on. Thank God, it is over. The fellows are actually smiling and laughing and joking.

➤ August 17

Saw Joe Louis referee some GI boxing matches tonight. Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson were putting on a little show for us. Matter of fact, I had an opportunity to fight Joe Louis. He wanted me to get up in the ring and box him, but I said I'd rather go out on another invasion.

➤ August 19

Some of the glider pilots have come back from France. Some were shot and some were killed on landing. Jerry had stuck posts in every field and the gliders were torn up when they struck them.

➤ August 20

Russo, Lodge and I went to Rome on a pass today. Big time.

➤ August 22

Well, the Ruptured Duck did it again. Took off at 6 AM and made the first area evacuation out of Southern France, hauling wounded back to Rome.

➤ August 24

Took off at 7 AM and made two trips just south of Leghorn. Patients not too badly torn up today, not much blood. A Squadron dance in Rome tonight but I'm too tired to go. I guess Yates is going to be assigned as pilot on my airplane. He had never flown a twin engine plane before he came in the Squadron and he was pretty nervous about it, too.

➤ August 25

My plane has been loaded with twelve 50-gallon barrels of gasoline to take to France tomorrow. Eleven planes are going. Tech Sgt. Johnson got his orders to go home today, Roofton and Mitchell are going also. Saw seven fellows bail out of a B-25 and let it crash. It hit over in back of the glider tents across the river and burned.

➤ August 26

Took off and flew the load of gasoline to Frejus, France, which is near where we dropped the paratroops. The landing strip was cut out through a small orchard and vineyard. The whole valley has posts about ten feet tall set in the ground by the Germans to tear up the gliders. The posts were pointed on top so as to give the paratroopers a bad time when they fell on them. The field was very dusty and was used for Spitfires.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ August 29

Some ships flew transition with new pilots. I can't imagine why they are all idle.

➤ August 31

Went to a softball game tonight.

➤ September 1

Was paid today. Randall, Peck and I went out to the beach this afternoon. Came back and had steak sandwiches in the Motor Pool.

➤ September 2

We went to Rome on a pass and all over town. Went to St. Peter's and saw Pope Pius XI. When we were in the Cathedral, four fellows brought the Pope in on their shoulders on a little seat and took him down the aisle. American soldiers were lined up on both sides and a lot of them had a cross, which they held up for the Pope to bless. When he passed me, I was close enough I could have shook his hand. They took him on up to the front and he sat up there on a beautiful throne, very ornate, such color I've never seen. It was the color that really hit me between the eyes, dark crimson, purple and gold, very, very beautiful. He started talking in a little squeaky voice and speaking in Latin and then, I think, probably in French. Then he spoke a little bit in English, and his voice was so weak we couldn't understand him. Seeing all the color and the work of Michelangelo, I'd like to go back and see it again. The whole thing was really something.

➤ September 4

Took off at 6 AM, went over to Lido and picked up a bunch of nurses and attendants. Flew them up to Sisteron, France. Had my first glimpse of the Alps.

➤ September 6

Have to stand roll call twice a day now. Too many guys gone to town, goofing off and getting drunk. Some of them they couldn't even find. Went into Rome to the Squadron dance. Didn't dance, but old Jonesy and I sure got gassed.'

➤ September 7

The Squadron had their two years overseas party tonight out at the beach. What a party. Everybody got pickled on beer and a lot of the guys didn't make it back home.

➤ September 11

Took off for Lido, picked up five nurses and five attendants. Went to Lyon, France, and got weathered in. The crew stayed all night in a Lyon hotel. The nurses slept on litters on the ship. When we walked down the street in Lyon, people stopped and stared at us and smiled and came up and shook hands. Lyon had only been liberated 3 or 4 days and they were glad to see us. I never realized how strong the Free French organization was. Nearly everyone was wearing the FFL arm badge. Kids, old people and women all packed some sort of a weapon. Went to a French cabaret and, boy, what a time we had in that joint. Plenty of action going on in there.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

➤ September 14

Went to Squadron dance tonight in Rome. Hartz got in a fistfight with an Italian girl. Not only got in a fight, but he grabbed her by the hair and swung her around until her feet weren't touching the floor. I thought he was going to pull her hair out. Hartz was a cook, a big guy with only one eye.

➤ September 15

I went to town on the water truck. Stayed about 4 hours in St. Peters, then went down to the Coliseum.

➤ September 16

Took off with a load of mail to France. Unloaded the mail and went to Frejus. Picked up Major Johnson and his new wife and another nurse and her husband and their Jeep. They had been honeymooning on the Riviera. Took them to Lido de Roma, another resort on the coast near Rome. Sure is a rough war for some people.

➤ September 18

The Allies made another airborne invasion in Holland yesterday.

➤ September 19

Made three trips to Rosia on area evacuation. Broke my thumb in a cargo door and it hurts like hell.

➤ September 21

Went out to a paisans house and drank some vino.

➤ September 22

Took off at 7 AM and went to Naples and picked up 18 bomber replacements and took them to La Jasse, France, about 60 miles above Marseilles. Took off and came back to Italy again. My pilot today was Ramirez, just over from the States, and he was a foul ball if there ever was one. He didn't know how to work the throttles, didn't know sic-em about how to raise and lower the gears, hadn't been in a twin engine before. I had to stand right there beside him and beg. The copilot was new and just over from the States, but he was a good gun.

➤ September 24

Completed a 50-hour inspection on my ship.

➤ September 25

Collitus called a meeting of all engineers and gave them hell for getting drunk. Guess the whole bunch was gassed up. Caton was busted from corporal to private for going over the hill. Homer Johnson got a week confined to quarters for going to town without a pass.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

➤ September 26

All crew chiefs were called in and bawled out for having dirty airplanes. Not only dirt, but dried blood on the floors. The floor was corrugated and the blood ran down those corrugations and bloody bandages stuck to the floor. I don't see how we can keep it clean. Had to go to an hour of discussion of world affairs, conducted by Lt. Prince. What a sissy.

➤ September 27

Found out we are moving again.

➤ September 28

Took off and flew a Jeep over to Pojemaine. The whole Squadron is moving over there.

➤ October 2

Flew on over here to Foggia airfield. This is a hell of a place. The wind blows a gale all the time and everything's wet. We are in tents on the far side of the field and surrounded by British. They have a bunch of Wellingtons out here.

➤ October 3

Spent all day getting my plane ready for a mission tonight. My ship is loaded with rifles and hand grenades. If weather permits, we are to crack the Brenner Pass. Saw a P-38 go out of control at about 20,000 ft. and dive to a crash on the other side of the runway. It must have been going 900 miles an hour when it hit. It was buried in the ground about 10 ft. He must have blacked out, as there were a bunch of P-38s practicing dog fighting. The mission tonight was called off.

➤ October 4

A lot of B-24s went up to Brenner Pass. Only a few came back. One had the whole tail end blown off and three dead were taken off.

➤ October 7

Our planes are still loaded and we are still waiting. The guys are getting the jitters again. Saw a bunch of heavies come back from Austria tonight and all were shot to pieces. The medics did a big business taking the dead and wounded off. 1500 heavies and 750 fighters went out on the raid from here. This is the largest airport in Italy.

➤ October 9

Was grounded yesterday by the flight surgeon because of a head cold and the medics found a blister on my left eardrum. Got flight pay, \$71.30.

➤ October 26

Pettit, Russo, Liberty and I went to town tonight and had a big Italian dinner. Went to the prizefights. Saw Billy Conn put on an exhibition.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1944 – Italy (continued)

➤ October 27

Now we are going to move back to Brindisi. Left Foggia with Perrini in a Medic's Jeep and drove down here to Brindisi. We are back in buildings at the southwest side of the field.

➤ October 30

My plane was loaded up with propaganda to be dropped on 14 enemy towns in the Balkans tonight. I was put back on flying status tonight so I'm going to take the mission. Take off time was 8 PM.

➤ October 31

Took off last night and went about 45 miles inland to Albania. It was a nice clear night and we found the target easily. It was a V of five fires in a small valley. We were attacked by ground fire. We were between them and the moon and could be very easily seen. They missed us, thank God.

➤ November 3

Queenie, the dog, had three pups last night. Big event, big celebration for that.

➤ November 7

Went out tonight with six ships going for the same target. It became dark in a hurry and very black. As we crossed Yugoslavia, I could see towns black out ahead of us when they heard us coming. We were shot at by three large guns, concussion rocked the ship, but we made it back without a scratch. And had to gas up for an early takeoff. I'm sure getting tired of flying.

➤ November 8

Had a run in with Master Sergeant Slayton today. If he wasn't such a little runt, I'd push his face in and he knows it.

➤ November 10

No missions. Jonesy came in my tent last night with a bottle of American whiskey and we sat up and talked until 1 AM. He is just back from a seven day rest in Rome. I don't think he got much rest, though. He said that Miss Lutz, an area evacuation nurse was killed in a crash with the 64th Group. Miss Lutz was with me on my first trip into Anzio and many others. She was a swell gal.

➤ November 11

Moved my bed down to the monastery, but moved right back again because it was too crowded, the place stunk, it was wet, the clothes were wet, the beds were wet, and the guys were drunk and smoking stale cigars. Today is Armistice Day. Yeah, it is.

➤ November 13

The boys are nervous wrecks today. They ran into a wicked storm over the Adriatic. It was so cold the controls froze. Barely made it in. Lightning hit the windshield, the paint was taken off the nose of all the ships by snow and sleet. The worst part is that No. 203 is still not back. Lt. Leeds, pilot, McFarland, copilot, F.L. (Forever Lost) Johnson, navigator, Sage, radio

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1944 – Italy** (continued)

operator and above all, Forrest Leroy Peck, my good friend, the engineer. We started in at Sacramento together. All open airports in Italy were called, but Peck had not come in. He radioed in that he had hit a storm on the way back.

➤ November 14

I guess Peck is gone. God, I hope he is alright.

➤ November 15

Well, the crew of No. 203, my old ship with Tandy, went down officially this morning as missing. The whole camp feels real bad about it. This is the first loss the 51st Squadron has had.

➤ November 16

Went into the dispensary to get something for hemorrhoids. Doc. Bagley was sick so he sent me to the hospital in an ambulance. I am now in the 35th field hospital near Manduria, southwest of Brindisi. I was operated on at 9 o'clock this morning for hemorrhoids. They gave me a spinal. I probably didn't have hemorrhoids in the first place, but I got operated on anyway. They have to do something to you.

➤ November 26

Feel pretty good. Sloey came in today with a bad tooth. Stewart the cook also came in. He got poisoned on vanilla extract. Had visitors all evening. Fritz has been crewing my ship for me. Hope they let him keep it.

➤ December 2

Went over to the field hospital for a treatment, a sitz bath. Turned the ambulance driver in for reckless driving when I got back. That cat should be in Indianapolis.

➤ December 5

We found out poor old Peck's fate today. The Yugoslav dispatcher who was along with him, bailed out and got back here. He said they were going up along the coast of Yugoslavia and Peck had just finished making coffee when an orange flame came off the right wing. The plane went into a right turn and the bail out bell came on. The Yugoslav had to crawl up to get out the door. He landed in the water a short way from the coast, and the plane crashed and burned on a small island. The Yugoslav swam to shore and was told by a sheepherder that the nearby town was full of Germans. The sheepherder got him some old clothes and connected him with the underground. Jerry was hunting all over for the American who bailed out and even asked the Yugoslav. The Yugoslav and the 10-man crew of a B-24 were loaded on a boat and smuggled over to Foggia. Jerry found and buried the remains of the five men.

➤ December 14

I was issued a new airplane and I started my acceptance check. Sure is a lot of new stuff on it that I don't know anything about. It's a new C-47B. The engines have dual instruments. Only 80 hours altogether on the engines. Was given a new guy by the name of Penna for my 1st Asst., on trial.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Italy (continued)

➤ February 23, 1945

Earl Pettit and Bob White went home today. They were given a big party last night and felt rough today. Hate to see Pettit go he's a good friend. Joe Stretcher and I were sitting in the plane this morning when a British Halifax ground looped on take off and tore off my rudder with his wingtip. It sure was a close call. He was going 120 mph and had 7,000 lbs. of explosives and 2,000 gallons of gasoline aboard. The landing gear folded up; the ship buckled in the middle, tore all to hell but didn't explode. Thank God. Took the rudder off, tough to see on a brand new airplane.

➤ February 24

Took the rudder off of Fritz's ship and put it on mine.

➤ February 25

Took off with ten Polish ground crewman from the Halifax outfit and took them to Rosignano. I ate in the British Mess and was called Sir for the first time.

➤ February 27

Went out on a courier run today, from here to Naples. Saw Bud Wallace up in Pomigliano. He used to live in Yuba City, California. Came back here and brought back a rudder for Fritz's ship.

➤ March 1

Loaded on 4,000 lbs. of radio equipment and flew to Belgrade. The Russians took Belgrade three or four months ago. Ate dinner with Russian, Yugoslav, and British officers. Had a good dinner and was treated fine by the Russians officers. But when we walked over to eat, we had to go through probably 200 Russian soldiers, and it was like walking through a pack of wolves or coyotes. There wasn't a word said. They all just stared at us and you could feel their eyes on the back of your neck. When we came back from dinner, we found the soldiers had unloaded the plane and had gone through everything. Things had been changed and moved around. They had inspected that whole airplane. I don't know what they were looking for, but they were a bunch of bums.

➤ March 14

Took off for a target about 10 miles from the Hungarian border. We were shot at by German 88s and small arms and ant-aircraft ground fire. Thought my time had come. The navigator was so scared he couldn't talk. The target was beside a road that Jerry was using. Made four passes to get the stuff out. Dark as hell, and only got shot at once coming back.

➤ March 16

Took off for Yugoslavia. The target was in a large rolling valley and my load was all food and lots of bundles were freefalls. Saw a bag of rice scatter when it hit the ground. Lots of Yugoslavs were out on the roads watching us drop.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1945 – Italy** (continued)

➤ March 17

Took off at 10:00 in very bad weather, ice and sleet over the Adriatic. Found the target and dropped the load. Rough as hell over the target. I heard later the Germans took the target zone about an hour after we left.

➤ March 18

Had the Articles of War read to us.

➤ March 19

Took off went to Yugoslavia. We came down through an overcast and came out in a canyon. It was close as hell. There were mountains on either side of us. Six ships dropped blankets and clothing. Flew above the clouds so we wouldn't get shot at. After we got back, we stood a formation and got the Air Medal Citation certificate.

➤ March 20

Took off at 10:00 and went to Yugoslavia. Saw a dead horse in the drop zone. I think we hit it with a bundle.

➤ March 21

Conjamel went home. His wife had married a Marine.

➤ March 24

Took off at 9:30. Had good weather and made a good drop. Just before we took off I was looking out the door and it banged shut and hit me on the head. It was a hell of a wallop and it knocked me silly. This afternoon my head and neck hurt so badly, I went in to see Doc. Bagley. He sent me to the 35th Field Hospital, where I'm writing this now with my head and neck in hot packs.

➤ March 25

My neck is still in hot packs, sore as hell. Horrible Horowitz came in today and said the Squadron was moving.

➤ March 28

I talked the medics into letting me out. Came back this afternoon in a Jeep. We're getting ready to move.

➤ March 29

We have started tearing down stuff. We are moving up to Tarquina. An advance detail is already up there.

➤ March 30

Took off at 9 AM and took up a load of lumber, heavy as hell. Had to pull 34 inches of mercury to stay in the air. Unloaded and came back. The left engine is running too cool and it spits. No time to fix it. Was loaded up tonight with mess tables and flooring. It looked too

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Italy (continued)

heavy to me, so I had the crew throw some of the flooring out. Somebody will probably get sore, but they can go to hell.

➤ March 31

Took off at 9 with the mess tables and all my personal belonging. All crews are sleeping in the ships tonight. The ship used 10 quarts of oil per hour in each engine. That's a lot of oil, something's wrong.

➤ April 1

Easter Sunday. Took off at 8:30 and went back to Brindisi, loaded on some stuff and eight fellows. Things are deserted there. Farrell and I went over to say goodbye to our old laundry woman and she bawled. A good old girl. Came back here and moved into a tent with Bunce, Shedd, Russo, and Renzi.

➤ April 3

All combat crews were called in and briefed. We are going on detached service, I think, back to the Po Valley.

➤ April 4

The raid has been called off for three days. Now we are sweating it out again, like before. Got bawled out for not standing roll call.

➤ April 5

Took a load of bomb outfit stuff to Rimini. Went through a nasty storm over the mountains below Florence. Rain, sleet, and snow. Some of the ships didn't make it. We flew over a town that was on fire. The 5th Army is fighting like hell below us.

➤ April 9

Everybody's on edge. We're going into combat somewhere. We're going on detached service tomorrow. Jerry has his back to the wall and is fighting like a cornered tiger. I think we are going in the Po River Valley or to Brenner Pass.

➤ April 10 – April 27

Left and flew in formation to Macherio. We were going to drop British paratroops across the Po River. One drop was in the middle of a German panzer camp. I had the British surgical team aboard, seventeen British medics. We slept in the ships up there. Finally, after five days, everything was called off and we came home in formation. We were up 16,000 ft. when we hit the prop wash from the plane in front of us. Our plane went out of control and we started into a spin, dropped about 15 feet, and it scared the hell out of all of us. Roosevelt died on the 12th and it made everyone feel like the devil.

➤ April 30

My nerves are shot. I hate to fly anymore and I sure sweat out these missions. I'm tired out.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Italy (continued)

➤ May 1

Mussolini was killed April 28 by Italian partisans.

➤ May 2

Had my first look at the Po Valley and the river. Saw where the 5th and 8th Armies crossed the Po the other day. They were fighting like hell above Verona this morning. This afternoon all was quiet. Heard tonight that all land, sea and air forces in Italy had unconditionally surrendered to the Allies at noon today. I saw a Jerry plane headed south escorted by ten British Spitfires. The German big shots making the surrender must have been aboard. Everyone around here is happy but no unusual excitement. Also, Hitler is said to be dead.

➤ May 4

Took off and went to Villa Franca at Verona, following the Arno River. Landed and picked up Col. Davies, a Captain and a Jeep. They are trying to get Venice as a rest camp. The Germans in Denmark are to surrender tomorrow. Berlin surrendered to the Russians. Not very much left now.

➤ May 5

The Italians must have thought the war was over last night as they shot guns and flares all night. Everyone but combat teams had to turn in their firearms. I still had my 45. I don't know what good it was. I couldn't find it half the time. The end is really in sight now. I'm just starting to wonder when I'll get to go home.

➤ May 6

Went to a Squadron dance in Santa Martinella. Had a good time there along the beach. They danced all afternoon in an open-air court under some trees. It was really very nice.

➤ May 7

Well, I guess this is it. Heard the Germans have surrendered everywhere. I thought when the war was over there would be a lot of noise and drunks around here. Instead there is sort of a stunned silence. Everything is going on just the same, only quieter. The 88th Division is going home. Boy, they really had a rough time of it and they certainly deserve to go home.

➤ May 8

This is the day we've been looking for. The Germans will surrender, effective one minute past midnight. Today, instead of raising hell, there was more silence. When it actually dawns on us it is over, we can't believe it. Tonight we had a program put on by the orchestra. The war is over, over here, and I can't believe it. I just can't believe it. It is V-E Day.

➤ May 10

Felt kind of nervous so I went in to see Doc. Bagley. Instead of giving me a pill he sent me to the hospital in Rome and they gave me a pill. The doctor said I have flying fatigue and have to stay here a few days. He asked me how long I'd been overseas and I said about 32 months, something like that. He asked how many flying hours I had and I said over 900, I didn't

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER**1945 – Italy** (continued)

know just how many. He said I could get home on the point system, on my flying hours. He said I had flying fatigue and shouldn't fly anymore and had to stay here for a few days.

➤ May 13

This is the third day and I told them I'd go crazy as hell if they didn't let me out of here. They have kept me three more days, giving me tranquilizer pills to make me sleep. Couldn't get in any other kind of mischief, so I slept. Five fellows were brought in last night who cracked up in a new C-46. All died last night, burned in the crash.

➤ May 17

Sure wish I could get out of here, but the doctor said I have to hang around. I would sneak out and go uptown but they hid our clothes from us. Quite a few fellows from the other Squadrons are in here with flying fatigue. They have just flown the daylight out of them and the poor devils are so nervous they can hardly speak.

➤ May 18

Sat around all-day and cussed.

➤ May 19

This is another day I've been waiting for. The head pill roller called me in his office and asked how I'd like to go home. I was so surprised, I could hardly talk. In fact, I felt like bawling. He asked again about my overseas, combat and flying time and filled out a bunch of papers. Also, he said I could get out of the hospital Monday. I'm sure glad of that. I will have a permanent case of nerves, if I stay around here much longer.

➤ May 20

My nerves are raising hell but if I tell the pill roller, he will never let me out. One of the 8th Squadron fellows went to pieces last night. His nerves gave way; he started bawling, got on his knees and prayed to die. It gave everybody the jitters. There was no nurse or doctor here, so the rest of us tried to take care of him. His nerves were completely shot to hell.

➤ May 21

Was released from the hospital and came home with the service group ambulance and found we are getting ready to move again.

➤ May 24

The ships spent the day hauling Squadron stuff up to the new base at Rosignano. Bunce and I put up a tent in a small alfalfa patch.

➤ May 25

Took off at 5 AM for Sienna with the Squadron orchestra. They have to play for a big dance at the 51st Wing Headquarters for General Manning's birthday.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Italy (continued)

➤ May 31

The Squadron has made up nine full crews to ferry planes back to the States. I am one of the nine crew chiefs to go. Boy, that was news to me. But, I hate to leave the old regulars here. We've been together a long time, closer than brothers.

➤ June 1

Turned in a lot of my stuff and got ready to go home.

➤ June 2

We went up to Lucca Marlia to visit Angelo Giusti. Old man Giusti is a relative of the Sutter Basin Giusti's. The old fellow was very glad to see me and we spent an enjoyable two hours talking. He left California in 1929, and used to farm beside my father in the Sutter Basin. Met the whole family and they posed for pictures. They sure are great people, living in a nice country. Stopped at Pisa and took some pictures of the Leaning Tower. Had good spaghetti in Lucca.

➤ June 6

Bunce, Perrini and I got a Jeep and went up to Lucca Marlia. Sure had a good time. The country around here is beautiful. Went over to Pietro Bugoti's house and ate and, boy, what a meal that was. He has a great house, a two story with a tower roof. All the floors are inlaid mosaics and all the fixtures are solid copper. And upstairs he was growing silkworms. He had mulberry trees outside and fed the leaves to these silkworms, just tray after tray of them. He had a beautiful place there. I wouldn't mind living around there. Many Italians in that district have or have had friends or relatives in Woodland and the Sutter Basin area in California. Lots of them have lived in the Basin and can speak good English. We are invited to a big feed next Sunday but I doubt that I will be here. Boy, we sure drank a lot of vino, too. They went out in the vineyard and got two great big glass containers, hidden from the Germans, that probably held 15 gallons each. They dug them up and, Lord, the vino started to fly. Then they started making the spaghetti. There was only one rooster in town and they killed that thing and placed it around the edge of the spaghetti plate, which must have been three feet long. And about every foot and a half there was a wineglass. The spaghetti was great and the vino wasn't too shabby either.

➤ June 10

Bunce, Renzi and I took a Jeep and went up to Lucca Marlia. Saw about ten thousand Germans prisoners being marched down the road, just miles of them. They were just as glad the war was over as we were. Also saw a lot of Germans driving American trucks in a convoy coming this way. It sure looked funny. We went to Pete Bugoti's house and had dinner. I'll never forget that meal. Bunce had to back away from the table. Those people are just great. We spent all afternoon visiting friends of Pete's and they all gave us a glass of wine. I would like to live in Marlia. It's a beautiful, beautiful place.

➤ Jun 11

All crew chiefs alerted to go home had to report to the line this morning.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Italy and Returning Home

➤ June 15

This is the day we've been waiting for. At 9:30 seven crews assembled in front of the orderly room and nearly the whole Squadron was there to bid us goodbye. At 10 o'clock we took off and came down here to Pomigliano Airbase at Naples. It seemed good to be back. We were loaded on a truck and brought to this reception center, where our service records were checked. Well, I'm on my way home.

➤ June 16

This morning we were assigned to our planes. I drew 4138, and what a battle weary old bastard that was. It was a total wreck. It has 2097 hours on it and has been through every invasion. We took it up for an hour this afternoon and then had to work on it all day. We were to take off for Tunis tomorrow, but now we won't leave until Tuesday.

➤ June 17

Worked all day making sure the airplane isn't going to fall to pieces over the ocean. It sure is in bad shape. Got my money changed to American and it was good to see again. I tried to get in touch with a guy by phone tonight but the 78th MPs have moved to Leghorn. His name was Charles M. Kimerer. He had the same name I did. I got his mail and he got mine. I tried to look him up before I left, but I never did get to see him.

➤ June 18

Tomorrow we are scheduled to take off for Tunis, heading home.

➤ June 19

Tunis has surely changed since the last time I was here. The new air terminal is a beautiful place now and very modern. All the barracks that were blown up are rebuilt and I am staying tonight in one of those. Good beds with sheets, a snack bar and a club where you can get a cold beer.

➤ June 20

Flew to Marrakesh, Morocco. We passed a little north of Nuvian but I couldn't see the old field. Arrived at Marrakesh and found we have to wait here for navigators before we can go on to Dakar. All six planes are having trouble of one kind or another. My engines are covered with oil already.

➤ June 21

Our navigators have arrived so I guess we will go on to Dakar tomorrow.

➤ June 22

Took off for Dakar, French West Africa, more than 1000 miles over the Sahara Desert. It is a beautiful but desolate place. The plateau land is purple and all colors of the rainbow. It is simply beautiful. Burned up both batteries and the radio went out. Got a nasty gas leak in the cabin tank line and I had to tear up the floorboards to fix it. The right propeller ran away on takeoff. We're out on the tip of the peninsula. The natives are Sengalese. The address here is Senegal, West Africa, on the Gold Coast.

WORLD WAR II DIARY OF CHARLES M. KIMERER

1945 – Returning Home (continued)

➤ June 23

What a terrible day. I feel like an old man tonight. We took off at 10 o'clock for Liberia. About two hours away we ran into a storm that threw the ship all over the sky. At times it got so dark we couldn't see our wing planes and barely see our own wingtips. Hinman, flying off our left wing, was finally afraid he might run into us and called in on the radio to turn back. We were 150 miles off the West Coast of Portuguese Guinea. Our radio compass went out and the batteries burned out, leaving us without a radio. The control panel went out and so did the generators. I wore blisters on my fingers trying to get the control panel working. We finally made it back to Dakar and when we got out of the ship, all of us were trembling. The other three ships must have made it on through because they are not here. Had the Air Transport Command pull a 25-hour inspection on the ship tonight. They installed another set of batteries and that makes three sets since we left Naples.

➤ June 24

Took off at 9:30 for Liberia again, another bad day. As soon as we went inland, we hit one tropical storm after another and barely skimmed over the top of the jungles. Both generators quit and the batteries soon gave out. We had no radio and the instruments quit working. I finally got one generator working, just before we landed. The jungles and swamps were very pretty but were certainly no place to land. Coconut palms towered above gigantic ferns. The vegetation was very, very dense. We passed over thatched huts in small villages. We were billeted in barracks with a roof made from palm leaves. It rains nearly all the time here. The mess hall is neat and clean. We went into the enlisted men's Club and drank beer. It's the first GI beer I had overseas where you could get all you wanted. The Club is lined inside with interwoven palm leaves, very pretty. Leopard and lion skins on the walls, and these were the real McCoy. American money is used here. Liberia is under U.S jurisdiction. Firestone has large rubber plantations around here. The natives get 9 dollars per month for working on this base.

➤ June 25

They put another new battery in the ship last night and also did a lot of other work on it. Took off at 9 for the Ascension Islands. The last two hours out, the right engine kept cutting out, water in the gasoline. It is a desperate feeling to be out over the ocean with a bad engine. This island is only 35 square miles and is volcanic lava. It has a long runway cut through the rocks. The taxi strip goes up the side of a hill. This island is full of airplanes, all coming back from the front, all going home.

➤ June 26

Got up at 5:30 and went out and drained about five gallons of water out of the gas tanks. We took off, climbed to 10,000 ft. and I'm writing this in the ship. It is now 2:45 in the afternoon and we are in a nasty storm. We have to go through it, because we don't have enough gas to get back. We're rocking and bouncing, hard to write. It is getting dark again. Farrell and Horton are close in on my right and left wing. The other ships are skimming through the mist and they certainly look ghostly out there. Just went up and checked the instruments and the right oil gauge is fluctuating. Looking out, I can see the right engine has sprung a nasty oil leak. We are about 400 miles off the coast of Brazil. Horton is about 300 yards off my left wing, but I don't see Farrell. I can smell smoke in here now. Mac and Joe are scared stiff and so am I. Farrell just

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1945 – Returning Home (continued)

came in on my right wing. It is clearing and just ahead is bright sunshine. I hope to God we don't lose all the oil in that right engine before we get to Brazil. Mac wants me up front to fly for him while he goes back and has a few belts to calm his nerves. Mac wanted to feather the right engine but we decided not to unless we have to. Well, we finally got in OK, and landed at Natal, Brazil. Those tanks hold 116 quarts of oil and when we landed there were 3 quarts left. Russo and Woody are here and all of us sat in the Post Exchange and drank beer until bedtime.

➤ June 27

Had a 50-hour inspection pulled on the ship so we had to stick around. All the other fellows went on ahead.

➤ June 28

Took off for Belem, Brazil. Flew over a lot of wild jungle, dense and green and matted. Landed, and will be glad to get on out of here. Horton and I are behind now. The rest have gone on ahead.

➤ June 29

Left for Georgetown, British Guyana. We hit one tropical storm after another. Flew across the mouth of the Amazon River and a lot of jungle. Came in here and landed in a blinding rainstorm. All the natives can speak English. The runway is just a clearing in the jungle. Many beautiful colored birds here.

➤ June 30

Took off for Puerto Rico and landed at a nice base. Had three marshmallow and two strawberry sundaes at the Post Exchange. Saw Starkey and Boeey. Boeey has been in England for a year. He didn't know that Peck was killed. Peck and Boeey both came from Arkansas, were at McClellan with me, and were very close. It was Peck and Boeey who had the donkey that smelled so bad. From here, we are going nonstop to Savannah, Georgia. It already seems like we are home.

➤ July 1

Took off at 4 AM, in the dark. Had to hold a flashlight so Mac could see the instruments. There are no lights on the plane, everything is burned out. We passed everything in the sky coming on in to Savannah and it sure seemed good to see the U.S. again. We landed at Hunter Field in Savannah and kissed our poor old beat up airplane goodbye, and actually we all kind of shed a tear when we had to leave it. We were given a quick physical, then went through customs. We were told not to bring anything back, like a monkey or a gun, but I see I could have brought an elephant home with me. They didn't tear into my stuff at all. Went through another service record and point check and also got paid \$18.25 per diem. Eli and I went to the beer garden and drank 2 gallons of ice cold beer. Three years ago I was in this kind of heat in South Carolina. Nevertheless, it sure is good to get back. Our time from Puerto Rico to Savannah was 7 hours and 10 minutes and it was 1400 miles.

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1945 – Returning Home (continued)

➤ July 2

We loaded into the C-47s of the Troop Carrier Command this morning and flew up to Charleston. We are all split up now. Mac and I are the only ones going west.

➤ July 3

Left here and joined others going to Camp Beale, California. We went west in the coach of a train. It was dirty and full of fleas, just an awful mess, bugs everywhere. Arrived at Camp Beale, Marysville, July 8, and was told I was never released from the 51st Squadron. I was given a 30-day furlough and told I would have to report back to the Squadron. What a blow that was. On July 10, I rode the bus into Marysville, where I waited for quite awhile on the corner for a streetcar but none came by. I was finally told they use buses now instead of streetcars. When I got home, my mother, brother and sister had gone out to Camp Beale to get me. There was nobody home.

➤ July 11

I was told to report to the Judge Advocate at Camp Beale. He offered me a raise in rank, and said I could make Major if I wanted to stay and go into the Army of Occupation and return to Germany. I said, hell no.

➤ July 16

Twenty-six of us were given our discharge papers. My total flying time overseas was 1,022 hours. I'm a free man.

➤ September

I was called into an orchard supply house in Yuba City to meet with field men from Libby-Hunt and Del Monte canneries, plus representatives from several chemical, spraying and dusting outfits. They asked me to go back into the seeding and dusting business and offered to buy eight Steerman biplanes, Army surplus, to convert to dusters. I said, no thank you. If at age 32, I was too old to fly for Uncle Sam, it's a cinch that at age 37 I'm too damned old to fly dusters again.