

November 2, 1943 San Pancrazio, Italy

Dear Mick,

I got a little something to tell you about, that is if the censor sees eye to eye with me. I can tell you that now I am in Italy, but I suppose you guessed that all the while. What I thought you and the boys would like to hear about [how] was the trip up here. When the average air corps unit starts to move it's usually short of drivers so you can guess that I was grabbed first off. Well we left and not a thing happened for the first hour but at the end of that time as luck would have it, my brakes went up. As the defective part wasn't to be gotten any where I was told to keep going brakes or no. After a few miles with no brakes, we came to the foot of a series of mountains that just continue for miles. That was too much for me without brakes, so I just decided to stop right there.

But luck was on my side for just as I stopped I glanced up and noticed a British repair shop. It took them a little while but they fixed it. About two miles from the repair shop, there was such a sharp turn, you had to back up to get around it. As we went further the curves became more frequent. If I'd try to have made it, I suppose I wouldn't have to write this tonight. My next problem was to catch up to the convoy which I managed to do. And here is the picture I want to try to describe to you. We camped that night in the heart of a city. And there happened a sight I'll never forget. As soon as we stopped, just as tho a signal were given, the women, children and even men were all about the camp. They were hungry and came to beg food. It so happened that the mess sergeant did have some left over and just as he was about to put it where the people could get hold of it, the mob rushed him. They hit him so hard they knocked him over. Then the battle was on. They clawed, scratched, and bruised each other just for a fistful of food.



Scene in Calabria, the first leg of the convoy to San Pancrazio. Note the convoy trucks in the background.



Italian Boy - Probably Livorno April 1944

Some of them were cut, but some of 'em were lucky enough to get food. Among the women were quite a few who were pregnant. The next morning, they actually drank the hot grease left over from frying bacon. The city itself was in ruins, not one building in the entire city had not been left untouched by either a bomb or shell. It was almost a ghost town.

But, did I feel sorry for these people?

I did not. Because I had also seen what the fathers, brothers and uncles of these same people had done to the French and Jews in Africa. Particularly in Tunisia where they were worse than the Germans. The rest of the trip was through very beautiful country, but very mountainous. We made one 14-mile climb at 6 miles per hour. It took us exactly 15 minutes to drop off the top of it, into the valley below. Now maybe you can understand why the army is making such slow progress here in Italy. I don't think I painted this picture very well but maybe it just gives you a rough idea.



"...I had also seen what the fathers, brothers, and uncles of these same people had done to the French and Jews in Africa. Particularly in Tunisia where they were worse than the Germans."

This is bad news I don't like to repeat. I got a letter from Mrs. Scott the other day and she told me that 'Scotty,' who was an aerial gunner was lost over Hamburg on July 26. Its a terrific blow to her but she's taking it pretty good from the way her letter reads. She thinks he'll come back. I know he won't. In case you don't know who I mean he was the guy who lived in Alexandria, Va. Yep, there is a war going on.



"I got a letter from Mrs. Scott the other day and she told me that 'Scotty,' who was an aerial gunner was lost over Hamburg on July 26." [Scotty is on the right. The last name of the flyer on the left is Stitt.]

Here's that occupation money I promised you. I hope you never get the chance to spend it. One lire is worth one penny.

Well, Mick, that's about all I can think of now. Don't expect a letter this long for another 10 months, because you just won't get it. Say hello to all the boys for me and if they want some of this money let me know and I'll send some. They also print 'em in one lire notes. I guess my next V mail will beat this letter to you but I hope it still interests you.

So long.

Hymie

P.S. Tiny just walked into my castle picked up the brown section of the "Sun" and sure enough they had pictures of Mathews County in it and he's tickled as hell. How about sending him a post card of scenes about Norfolk or Portsmouth. Just address it Sgt. J. C. Anderton, same address as mine.



Sgt. J. C. "Tiny" Anderton



"Tiny" shoveling coal at Ft. Bragg during basic training.

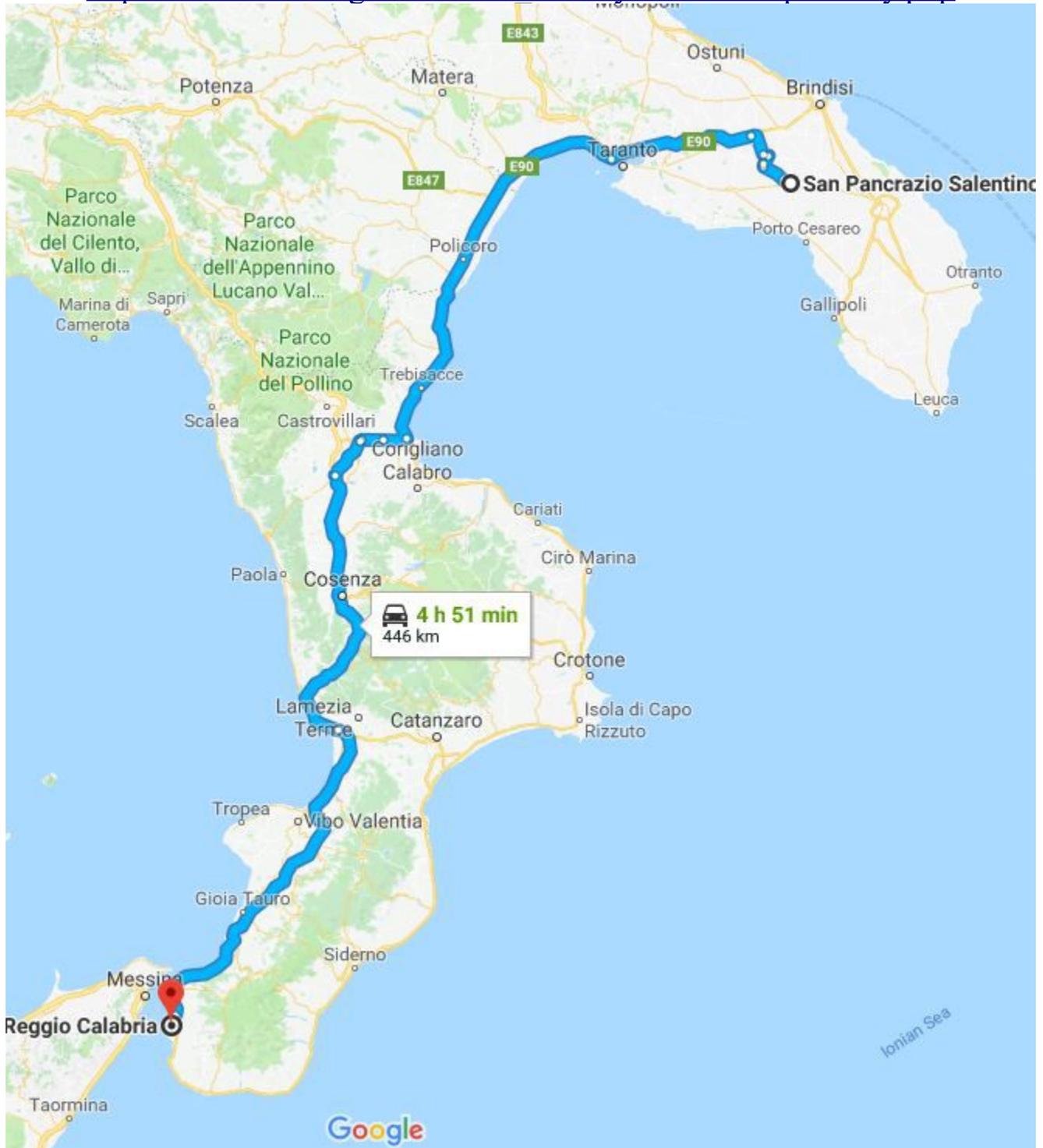
Probable route taken by the convoy.

On today's modernized highways the 227-mile trip takes five hours.

In 1943 it took at least three days.

Read more about the move in the 340th Bombardment Group HQ War Diary:

http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340thGroupHistory.php



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