

Operation Torch – The 154th Observation Squadron Reunited

Francis Saturn Kalinowski was a Warrant Officer assigned to the 154th Observation Squadron, an Arkansas based National Guard unit that was called to active duty on September 16, 1940. After extensive stateside training, the majority of the squadron departed New York City and arrived in North Africa November 8, 1942 to participate in Operation Torch. The airplanes arrived in early December, having flown from Florida to South America and across the Southern Atlantic via Ascension Island to Africa. Only 23 of 36 planes that started the trip arrived in North Africa.

Flying A-20s, P-38s, P-39s and P-51s, the 154th flew combat missions from several airfields in North Africa. The 154th is credited with flying the first combat mission in a P-51 in the Mediterranean April 9, 1943. The squadron moved to Bari Airdrome east of Naples, Italy in February 1944. There the 154th flew combat missions all across Europe until the end of the war. The squadron earned a distinguished unit citation for its service in operations over the [Ploesti oil refineries](#) in August 1944.

The story picks-up where Frank is dug-in at an air corps encampment outside Arzew.

Saturday, November 14, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“☆☆ ?☆! Are we never going to get any rest? I was sleeping so nice, dead to the world for the first time in a week and this had to happen. At four A.M. I was awakened to a sand and wind storm. NUTS! What’s the use? My sleep bag was full of red dirt and sand, in eyes, mouth, ears and nose full of grit, a nice clean pillowcase just brown and dusty. All my stuff full of dirt and sand and the wind blowing like hell. I put on my clothes and went out in the storm to cover up the open end of my pup tent with a rain coat. I pinned it and tied it and put rocks in the pockets but didn’t do that much good. Just about everyone was either up covering the front of the tent or sitting inside holding onto the tent poles. Half the tents were blown down and clothes and towels and handkerchiefs and socks were blowing all over the place. I crawled back in my tent and put my bags against the raincoat and packed rocks on it but the sand and dirt still blew in through the bottom of the tent. God how that damn wind blew. I was disgusted and plopped down on the dirty sleeping bag with my clothes on. I covered my face with a towel and fell asleep at about 5. Up again at 7:00 A.M. The wind was still blowing like hell and accompanied rain. That’s fine, now everything gets nice and muddy. What a breakfast in that wind. Dirt and hunks of straw and weeds in the chow and coffee, Dust blowing so we could hardly see to eat. The wind blew chow cans over and would blow the dog biscuits out of your

hand if you didn't hold on to it with all five fingers. After breakfast, I crawled back in my dirty tent and started to write to Bobbie. Sweet, when you read these pages you will understand why I couldn't very well write sooner. I would have written under any circumstances but we didn't have any way to mail any letters so it wouldn't have done much good. The wind died down by 9:00 o'clock and the sun came out but I just kept writing and had six sheets written by noon. After some G.I. rations I moved everything out of my tent. Shook and cleaned all the dirt and sand out of it and fixed the tent up like home again. Then I washed up, did some laundry in my tin hat and started writing more to Bobbie. Had eight sheets written by supper, time then it was too dark to write. Had a good supper. G.I. ration meat and beans, tea with enough cream and sugar, and real white G.I. bread and butter that the guys corralled somewhere in town. BOY! but that bread tasted good after eating dog biscuits all week. I ate three great big chunks of it. Some of the boys corralled a French truck and fixed it up with a battery and some parts from a wrecked barge. Tonight they brought in two large 250 gallon barrels of wine that they borrowed from a blown up winery. So we tapped one barrel and everyone proceeded to get a little tipsy. I got me a canteen cup full and sipped on it. I sat around chewing the rag with a bunch of officers sipping wine until 7:30 P.M. then crawled in between the sheets and was asleep by 8:00. Good night darling, I'm thinking of you."

Sunday, November 15, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Up at 6:30 A.M. BOY! What a good snooze that was. Had British rations for breakfast; hot sausage, left-over G.I. bread and hot tea. The bread was a little dusty but a lot better than dog biscuits. We even had jam out of the British rations. Finished my laundry in the morning and then wrote Bobbie three sheets before I had my G.I. hash lunch. Went to the beach in the afternoon, had a swim and scoured my mess kit in the sand. Our boys with the borrowed French truck borrowed 300 pounds of frozen beef from the docks. What you don't take someone else will so we have a detail scouting around for good things. So thanks to them we had roast beef a plenty for supper. I bet I ate a pound myself. Real fresh cow meat fit for a king. Our wine is being rationed out one canteen for lunch and one canteen for supper. That's two quarts per man per day and that's too much. I had two cups today, about a pint altogether and that's plenty for me. I bought 75 tangerines for a dollar from an Arab and I ate so many of them that I feel like a tangerine. These Arabs come around in their droopy drawers and capes and sell tangerines, onions, and eggs. Those eggs may be chickens on the half-shell so I don't want any. The native kids gather around in crowds and hang around gathering empty coffee tins and anything shiny. We keep them out of our area so they hang around outside. You can throw a dog biscuit or a piece of G.I. hard candy or cigarette out there and they all dive for it and have a mad scramble. They sure are big chisslers. To sleep at 7:00 P.M. after about the twentieth tangerine. BURP!"

Monday, November 16, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“AH! This is more like it. Had another good night sleep and sure feel all rested up now. Wrote four ‘V’ mail letters this morning ready to mail whenever we can mail letters. Went down to the beach in the afternoon to cut me a big hunk of rubber from one of the rubber invasion rafts. Now I have a good rubber floor to cover the whole inside of my pup tent. At 4:00, we received orders to knock down and roll up ready to move. We ate an early supper then packed up for the move. I was all rolled and ready in half an hour. Heard Bob Hope programe (sic) over a portable radio while waiting for the trucks to get here. I’m writing this by the light of the moon sitting on my house and home all rolled up in my bedding roll. My pack is ready to go on my back so I’m just sitting, waiting and sipping a cup of wine. The trucks arrived at 9:45 P.M. but there weren’t enough to move us all, so about 50 of us are staying back until morning. I unrolled my sleeping bag, put up the sleeping bag shelter over my head and went to sleep at 11:30. I’m sleeping with my clothes on and using the two shelter halves for covers.”

Tuesday, November 17, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“BLANKETY BLANK, it rained last night because I didn’t have my pup tent up I guess. I started dry but my bedding roll got wet and muddy around the edges. I climbed out of bed at 6:45 and cooked some G.I. hash and coffee then rolled up my stuff mud and all. Loaded up the trucks at 8:30 and left at 8:45. Rode about thirty miles to the Tafferui Airdrome near Oran. I sure enjoyed the African scenery. Arrived at 11:30 A.M. unloaded and I cooked my lunch. At 12:00 noon we got orders to roll up and be ready to move to Algiers in four hours. I didn’t even start unrolling mine so I was ready then and there. Just addressed nine envelopes to Bobbie and packed in 45 sheets of letters. Had to do it fast so I just folded sheets every which way. Got the letters on the plane flying to (??) just in time. There sure are a lot of planes here. Waited around all day and evening but seems if they couldn’t get a train or an engine or something so we’re not leaving today. So after a bean supper, I unrolled my roll out on the ground and went to sleep, full pack.”

Wednesday, November 18, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

Rise and shine at 6:30 A.M. wet with dew. I built a fire and cooked my can of G.I. rations and made some coffee. I let my bedding roll dry in the sun all morning then shook out all the dirt and crap and made it up with sheets and all. I rolled it up nice and pretty. This afternoon an American PX opened up here so I stood in a mile long line for about an hour and bought my ration; 4 packs Camels, 3 boxes of matches, 3 chocolate bars, 3 cakes of soap, pack of chewing gum, pack of playing cards, and a pair of sunglasses. Wrote Bobbie before supper and got the letter on a plane. After a G.I. slum supper we loaded up on trucks and rode about 11 miles to Oran and climbed aboard a train headed east; chugging at 9:15 P.M. The officers are riding in

first class compartments. This is just like a British train but a heck of a lot wider. There are six of us in a compartment. At 10:00 P.M. we got out canteen cups, chocolate bars and canned heat and cooked some hot chocolate. We drank that and ate dog biscuits and it sure tasted good. Saw myself in a mirror for first time in over a week. I stepped in the men's room but there was a guy there so I said excuse me and he said excuse me. I looked again and said CRIPES it was just me in a mirror. I thought the guy looked familiar. I'm changing a bit, my face is tanned and fuller and my hair is getting lighter. I'm getting sun kissed. Now 11:30 P.M. and I'm watching the African scenery. The moon is sure bright and it looks as light as a dark day even though it is almost midnight. At about 12:00 the train stopped in a station for a few minutes and a couple guys borrowed a couple crates of sugar cured dates off a freight train. I guess everyone on the train ate a handful of them. Fell asleep in the seat at 12:30."

Thursday, November 19, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Woke up a few times during the night to shift cheeks and finally woke up at 7:15 A.M. I washed and shaved and combed my hair then ate a can of cold hash for breakfast. Watched scenery all morning and afternoon. Traveled in mountains all day and went through upteen tunnels. Saw Arab tents in the woods and mud and straw huts on the hills and plenty of barren mountains. Ate more cold hash for lunch and cold beans for supper. Arrived in little station on outskirts of Algiers. At 7:30 P.M. I had a sore neck from the train ride and from sleeping in the seat. We heated some water on the remainder of the canned heat. Had to end up by putting little splinters of wood in the can to make the fire last long enough to heat the water. I made coffee, some made tea and some made hot chocolate. BOY! after eating that cold food all day that hot coffee tasted and felt like a million bucks to my stomach. That coffee, one sardine and 5 dog biscuits and a chocolate bar was my second supper. We're to park in the station for a while so I climbed up in the baggage rack and tried to go to sleep. At 10:00 P.M. they decided that we'd park there all night so I got my bedding roll and unrolled it on a concrete platform in the station. Quite a few of us did it. Feels good to sleep stretched out."

Friday, November 20, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Slept well considering all the troop trains that passed by about six feet from my feet and four feet from my head. The whistles were blowing; the natives and French troops were jabbering and tramping around all night long. It's a wonder that I didn't get my face stepped on. Got up at 6:45 A.M. in front of an audience of about three hundred French and Arab men, women and soldiers. The station was crowded. Some of the officers undressed to go to sleep and they were a comical sight trying to put their pants on inside their sleeping bags. I built a small fire out on the tracks and cooked me some G.I. rations and coffee. We had a hell of a time convincing the French that we didn't come over to fight them and now they can't do enough for the

Americans. They are passing out wine, and small loaves of dark bread, oranges and smiles galore. I had three free oranges and then a little girl gave me a medallion on a blue ribbon. I passed out a couple of sticks of gum, some G.I. hard candy and some British cigarettes. Cooked some slum and tea for lunch. BOY! does this hot food taste good YUM! YUM! We're using our water sterilizing pills now and sterilizing each canteen full. First a white pill, half an hour later a blue pill and in another half hour it's ready to drink. It doesn't taste bad either. Not after some of the yellow water we've had. Pulled out of station at 3:00 P.M. and rode about 20 miles back to Blida. Unloaded and marched about two miles to Blida Military Airdrome. Moved into empty hanger temporarily and cooked my chow on a can of gas and dirt. At 7:30 P.M. we had an air raid alarm so I went out to see the fireworks. The Jerries were bombing Algiers about twenty miles away and Mason Blanch , another Airdrome, about 11 miles from here. There were two raids in one hour almost continuous. Saw the bombs flashes and heard the explosions even this far away. The sky was full of tracers, and flack galore. At 9:00 P.M. I unrolled my sleeping bag on the dusty hanger floor and went to sleep at 9:30 P.M."

Saturday, November 21, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Up early after a good quiet night sleep, had calisthenics for 15 minutes then a ready heated breakfast. A couple of our portable kitchen gasoline stoves are set up in the hanger so the cooks fixed some British rations for breakfast with square dog biscuits. Washed up and shaved this morning and did a bit of laundry in my tin helmet, then scrubbed and polished my canteen nice and pretty. It was just black on the outside from where I heated all that coffee water. After chow, I wrote to Bobbie. This is the third anniversary that we've been apart. I love you and miss you sweet. Don't know if we stay here tonight or not so we all rolled up this morning. Started to move out once while I was writing to Bobbie but it was called off. Expecting an air raid on this field tonight. Just about all the French planes took off west to another field. I went way back of the hanger after our 4:30 supper and found me a good trench in case we are raided. At 8:10 P.M. we had an air raid alarm and everyone took off out of the hanger. I went to my trench and waited there watching the bombing. The raiders bombed Algiers and Mason Blanch Airdrome again. The raid lasted about an hour tonight; it was really hot while it lasted. I think they shot down a raider because there was a big flash in the sky and flames fell slowly to the ground as if burning gasoline from a blown up airplane. I could see all the bomb flashes and here the dull detonations as they exploded. At one time I could hear the bomber engines as they passed near our field. None came over us so I didn't have to dive in my ditch. Algiers and Mason Blanch sure threw the lead and shells into the sky during the raid. At 9:30 we had the All-Clear signal so I hoofed back to the hanger, unrolled my sleeping bag and went to sleep. We all call the hanger the death trap because that is the first thing that would get bombed in a raid. We are supposed to move into barracks as soon as they are cleaned out. Maybe tomorrow. Toot Toot termites. Happy Anniversary Sweet."

Sunday, November 22, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Calisthenics, breakfast and then rolled up again. Went through my two bags and rearranged some of the stuff this morning. Had a Jerry observation plane over the field a few minutes ago taking pictures. The boys got five shots of shrapnel up at him before he ducked back in the clouds. When they develop the pictures and see all the ships on this field they sure will come over to lay a few eggs. After lunch, I shaved, bathed, shampooed my hair and did my laundry all in five gallons of water. I spent all afternoon cleaning up but it was worth it. I even shined my shoes. Wrote letter to Bobbie after supper. Had air raid alarm at 7:00 P.M. so I took off to the fields behind the hanger. The Jerries bombed Algiers and Mason Blanch as usual and I watched the show as usual. Went to sleep in the hanger at 9:45 P.M. right after the All-Clear was given.”

Monday, November 23, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Blankety Blank ☆☆☆!!!☆ Of all the times to have an air raid! The alarm sounded at 3:15 A.M. so we all jumped into our clothes, guns and tin helmets and took off away from the hangers. They haven't bombed us yet but are liable to on any one of these raids. Algiers and Mason Blanch were raided again steadily for an hour and a half. I got tired of standing out there by the trenches in the cold so I came back to the hanger and crawled back in my sleeping bag at 4:30 A.M. We could hear the planes pass by a few times. At about 4:45 one plane swooped down low over the hangers. It was too late to run then so I just hugged the floor. It dropped one flare but no bombs. Our gunners really threw up a barrage of lead and shells and the raider didn't return. The field was lit up by that flare for about three minutes. It was 5:30 A.M. before I went back to sleep. After breakfast at 7:30 I went right back to my sleeping bag and slept until noon. After lunch I went to Blida with a couple of officers. Changed ten bucks into 750 francs and began shopping. Bought Bobbie some perfume for 384 francs and two solid silver bracelets for 246 francs. Then I bought eight oranges for five francs and walked back to the Airdrome just in time for supper. At 5:30 P.M. began writing to Bobbie. At 6:15, air raid alarm sounded. I grabbed my gun and tin hat and took off to the trenches. I keep a pair of gloves and a flashlight hooked on to my harness so that all I have to do is make one grab and I have everything. Didn't see any bombing or hear any planes. The sky is overcast with low clouds. 7:15 All-Clear sounded so I came back to the death trap and finished Bobbie's letter. Now 9:00 lights out and to sleep. OOPS! Spoke too soon. ☆☆☆!!!☆ 9:05 air raid alarm. No bombing. 9:55 All-Clear. 10:10 air raid alarm. Same targets were being bombed tonight. Raiders passed over our field a couple of times but didn't drop any bombs. I got down in the trench when I heard planes but the rest of the time, sat up on top watching and listening to the bombing going on 20 and 11 miles away. 12:30 still bombing Algiers and Mason Blanch and along the coast. I'm slowly getting cold and peed off. 12:45, to hell with the raiders I'm going back to bed. Didn't hear any All-Clear before falling asleep.”

Tuesday, November 24, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Slept through breakfast until 8:00 A.M. Managed to get handful of British dog biscuits, gob of margarine and cup of black coffee without sugar or cream. After lunch three of us cleaned up our room in the barracks about half mile from the hanger. Those barracks were full of bed bugs and the guys have been spraying gasoline, scrubbing and burning off rooms, floors and steel cots. Our room is clean and safe and rid of the varmints so we’re moving in. I made two trips with all my stuff and am pooped. I made a third trip to the hanger to er-borrow a light bulb for the room. Had to climb the hanger girders and do a tight rope walking act on the beams but I got me a bulb. Spent about thirty minutes shaking the hanger dust out of my good old bedding roll. Nothing is unpacked but my sleeping bag is made up ready for some tall sleeping and boy I’m going to sleep. We are quite a ways from the hangers so we won’t have to do any running unless we here bombs going off in the field. I’m sure glad to get out of that hanger death trap. Wrote letter to Bobbie after making up my bunk. 8:30 P.M. air raid alarm sounded and lights out. Hey! Hey! Let them come I’m going to bed.”

Wednesday, November 25, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“BOY! OH! BOY! Was that good sleeping in the cot. After two weeks the ground and even the concrete began to feel soft. In this cot though I just felt as if I was floating in midair. Slept like a log all night long. Trotted in rain to the hanger for breakfast. Built a clothes rack and unpacked my clothes this morning. Tried to make a gasoline heater out of tin cans but only ended up by smoking up the room. Would you believe it? Snow in Africa. YEP! We have plenty snow on the mountains only five miles from here and me without skis. Curses. It’s been raining and drizzling all day long and cold and damp as heck. I’m glad that I’m not in a pup tent today. Had supper in mess hall today. YEP! Ate sitting on a stool with my mess kit on a table. Next thing you know we’ll have running water. Wrote to Bobbie after supper then cooked myself a cup of coffee and ate some good old crispy, crunchy, G.I. dog biscuits. 8:55 P.M. the wind is howling, the rain is pattering against the window panes (imagine that, a “window”) and I’m ready for some more of that good sleeping in the upper steel cot. Good night termites.”

Thursday, November 26, 1942 “Thanksgiving” (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Still raining and drizzling this morn. The snow is still up on the mountains and I’m all rested up after more good sleeping. Too wet to do anything outdoors. I bought 18 oranges from a native at the gate and have been eating them all morning. Breakfast and lunch same as usual, British rations, dog biscuits and tea. Layed down for a snooze in the afternoon. Guess what we had for supper? Ox-tail soup. What a hell of a thing to feed on Thanksgiving. Ox-tail soup sure isn’t going to pass for my dinner not today anyway. When I got back to my room I dug out the canned heat, a can of G.I. hash, a can of crispy crunchy G.I. dog biscuits and started cooking. In

about twenty minutes I had the best hash ala tinne canne, biscuits and coffee noekreme that you ever tasted. A dish towel for a table cloth, a cartoon of turkey propped up before me and it was a real dinner. After my delicious supper I wrote to my sweet and went to sleep well satisfied.”

Friday, November 27, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“HOORAY! We had our Thanksgiving dinner today. Boiled chicken, dressing, boiled turnips and string beans, olives, oranges, scallions, tea, and real dark French bread. Imagine that “bread.” About all I did today is eat. In fact I ate so much that I didn’t even have time to take a nap. Bought some goobers from a native at the gate. A pocket full for 5 francs and ate just about all of them plus about 10 oranges and tangerines. I sure feel full today. Started my daily dozen again after supper and then wrote to my honey and to sleep at 8:30 P.M.”

Saturday, November 28, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“1 A.M. air raid alarm, Jerry flares all over field, all out into air raid trenches. I jumped out into my tin hat and clothes but before I could get out I heard a Jerry go into a dive so I went on the floor. Three bombs went off and they just shook the walls of the barracks. I picked myself off the floor and took off out to the trench. The anti-aircraft defenses were filling the black sky with flashes and shrapnel. We could hear one raider circling high up in the sky. Suddenly, the steady crescendo of the roaring engines increased steadily. Raider diving in for a bombing run. We heard him pull up out of the dive and two bombs went off in the field, WHUMPH- WHUMPH, then the eerie low whistle, decreasing in pitch “Bomb.” The louder the whistle got the smaller I seemed to shrink up, then “BOORUMPH” all hell broke loose. That third bomb exploded not more than 150 yards from our trench. For several minutes nothing but the bursting arches could be heard. No one spoke. I think everyone was having his moments of Thanksgiving right then and there in that cold concrete trench. 1:45 A.M. All-Clear and back to bed. I no sooner undressed and laid down when Prrrrr enemy engines overhead so out we go again. More flares & six more bombs but none as close as that one. 2:30 All-Clear. 2:50 air raid alarm. That went on until 5:30 A.M. and there wasn’t a wink of sleep until then. Six separate raids / nine flares over the airdrome and about twenty-eight bombs were dropped. I felt the concussion of every single one. I undressed twice for bed but when I saw that the raiders were becoming a habit I just left my clothes on. I just couldn’t quite fall asleep between raids so was up and awake from 1:00 A.M. to 5:30 A.M. Slept to 7:30 A.M. Ate breakfast and then went to see the damage. That one bomb that hit so near us dug quite a crater, killed a mule, pushed all the windows in, frames and all, on four buildings, battle scarred the walls on seven buildings including our barracks and one Frenchman got a belly full of shrapnel. That’s the only guy hurt by all the bombs that were dropped. Several boys were knocked flat on their butt that I know of, that

close one jarred every bone in my body and just about lifted me a foot off my seat. Some of our boys were caught with their pants down that are outside of the trenches and when the bombs went off they just took off like streaks in the dark and ran into clothes lines, barbed wire and what have you. One guy has a big shiner and several boys have some mean scratches. All I have is bags under my eyes from lack of sleep. I picked up a handful of bomb fragments from around the buildings that were hit by that close one and went to sleep again until noon chow. After chow two of us went to Blida had a haircut and shampoo then waited in line for an hour and a half to get a hot shower at the public bath, walked around town seeing the sights and crummy Arabs and smelling the stinking smell of filthy streets. At 5:00 we ate in a French clippy restaurant. Soup, dark bread, a fried egg and a piece of steak the thickness of tissue paper, a tangerine, a few dates and a glass of wine for forty-seven francs apiece. It was worth 47 francs for that one fried egg but I can't say much for the rest of the meal. 6:00 P.M. we hoofed back to the barracks. 6:30 P.M. I cooked me a cup of tea and ate some dog biscuits, and then wrote to my sweet. Now 8:00 P.M. lights are out, the Jerries are raiding Algiers and I'm writing these words by flashlight. Right now I'm going to put my coveralls over my clothes, put my tin hat and gun beside me and go to sleep. Goodnight darling, Goodnight Blondie."

Sunday, November 29, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"3:15 A.M. air raid alarm. We stayed on the alert in our beds, all dressed waiting for the drone of engines. No raiders to be heard and in about forty minutes the All-Clear was sounded and we went back to sleep. After breakfast I shaved and cleaned up and was to begin doing some laundry when the C.O. called me and now I have a job coordinating and furnishing maintenance and service crews to a transport group here. So I have rosters to make up and gripes to keep down until our air echelon arrives. Ox-tail soup for supper so all I ate was pudding, dog biscuits and tea. Had a good workout after chow then cooked myself a can of good old G.I. slum. It sure was good. Bought 15 tangerines for 8 francs and 5 francs worth of goobers and ate them all. 7:30 P.M. blackout, 8:00 P.M. to bed full pack. Toot Toot sweet."

Monday, November 30, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Bought some oranges this morning for my hourly snack. What a treat for lunch today. Real mashed potatoes and real honest to goodness G.I. baked beans. I sure ate a mess kit full and smacked my chops. Tended to my business of furnishing my men for jobs on the troop carriers. Took a little sun bath on my wide window sill while reading a well worn but good old U.S. Colliers magazine for almost an hour. What a letdown for supper, ox-tail soup. So after my workout I cooked a can of slum and ate it in the blackout. Our lights go out anytime after supper so we can't do much after 7:00 or 8:00 P.M. but go to sleep. 9:00 P.M. is an ungodly late hour to be up and about unless there is an air raid on. Wrote most of Bobbies letter by

flashlight tonight. OH! yes, Surprise, one of the room-mates bought two doz. clothes pins today. I'll be able to hang out my wash in style now."

Tuesday, December 1, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Here we go again. 2:45 A.M. air raid alarm sounded, so I got up and dressed then layed back on my bunk listening for raiders or gunfire. In half an hour we had our All Clear so I went back to sleep still dressed for the trenches in case. This morning I did some laundry and boiled and scrubbed and rinsed until everything was nice and snowy tattle tale gray. That wash sure looks good out there on the line with its pretty new clothes pins. I had an officer buy me a scrub brush this morning so this afternoon I scrubbed my leggings, two pairs of shoes and holster and got all the old shoe polish off. Now I have to shine the heck out of them. I read a bit more on the window sill and absorbed some of that good ultra violet that has been pouring down out of that sun today. We were supposed to have a bag of mail from Algiers a couple days ago but come to find out no one at Algiers knows a thing about it. Perhaps before this book is filled I'll be able to say that I received one of my Honey's letters. Today we began French classes for the officers after our daily meeting. One of our officers is teaching it. Just listen, "*Ou est L'englise trez bien.*" Pretty good Hey? Ten more lessons and I'll be able to tell you what it means. Hey! Hey! Got me about a half pound of sugar tonight so now I can have my coffee and dog biscuits any night I please. Just downed a good cup of steaming coffee with enough sugar in it. If I only had some powdered milk. Now 8:15 and to sleep."

Wednesday, December 2, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Only twenty-three more shopping days until Christmas. I sure feel fine after a full night of undisturbed sleep. My afternoon off today so up on the barracks roof I went with a blanket and a pillow for a sunbath and a snooze. Both were fine. After supper, which I gobbled down with gusto, I grunted and groaned my one, two, three for an hour, then a good hot cup of sugar with plenty of coffee in it and I wrote my sweetie by flashlight. No mail for us and no news of any mail. Today was just another day and another \$10.03 earned. Now 8:45 P.M. and to sleep. Goodnight termites."

Thursday, December 3, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Midnight! Enemy silk in the sky! Everyone on the alert for attack by parachute troops. We dressed and loaded our guns, guards were doubled and we went back to sleep dressed and on the alert. Some enemy paratroops were dropped in the hills 18 kilometers from here; about 10 miles. An attempt may be made to destroy buildings on this field. 1:00 A.M. sound asleep. 6:15 A.M. air raid alarm and out we go. Heavy fog shrouding field, enemy engines droning overhead, no bombs dropped. 7:10 A.M. All Clear. After breakfast I dressed up, attended the officers

meeting and walked into town to have a picture taken. Found out they only make pictures in the afternoon so I walked back to the field for chow. Got paid at noon then at 2:00 P.M. back to town for the pictures. Had four shots taken and am getting 24 pictures for 350 francs. Another couple mile walk back to the field and supper. After all that walking I cut my daily dozen to a half dozen today. A letter to Bobbie, a cup of coffee and to bed at 8:40 P.M.”

Friday, December 4, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“HOORAY! A full nights sleep. BOY! am I happy. Bought twenty air mail stamps this morning. HEY! HEY! Now I don’t have to worry about a letter to my honey for twenty days. Spent the morning giving two lectures to the Engineering section. Spent most of afternoon eating tangerines, sun bathing on the roof and making notes for tomorrows lecture. Bought ten more air mail stamps this P.M. Wrote letter to mom and dad and nightly letter to Bobbie. Hmm, very quite day.”

Saturday, December 5, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Nothing unusual today. Gave my third lecture to the boys this morning. Washed my field jacket this afternoon and read indoors. No sunshine today but a few showers. I’m all out of Camels and have been smoking these punk British cigarettes for the past couple days. Was rationed two packs of Raleigh cigarettes this afternoon. I guess that’s our ration for a week. Only about thirty matches left to my name, and no place to buy any. I don’t care what I run out of as long as it isn’t air mail stamps. Workout, coffee, and letter as usual after supper then to bed. BOY! the good old bed, it sure is good sleeping up there once I fall asleep and when we’re not raided during the night.”

Sunday, December 6, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“I got those picture this morn and here is a set for this little book. I didn’t waste much time after the officers meeting this morning to walk to town, get the pictures and walk back. After lunch one of our brand new airplanes came in so I spent all afternoon at the airplane looking it over from nose to tail. It sure is a fine piece of flying machinery. Our air echelon with all our good airplanes is at Tafferui and we should be together very soon. That means that we or they are going to do a lot of travelling very shortly. I sure hate to think of another train ride like the last one. I hope the air echelon comes here.”



Monday, December 7, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Got my boys working on that one airplane this morning and then collected up all the technical orders out of it. Read up on these T.O.s rest of morning and afternoon. I think I read myself into a headache and so I just took a couple of aspirins, supper, workout, letter and to sleep.”

Tuesday, December 8, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Still have that headache. Another ship came in this P.M. with troubles. So out we went in the rain to take care of things. Worked on ships until 8:00 P.M. I got wet and didn't get to do my calisthenics and only got to write about eight lines to Bobbie before the lights went out curse'em. Went to bed at 9:00 but no sleep until about 10:30. Dreamt that I ate two heaping mess kits full of slum. BLANKETY BLANK it would be slum instead of a hamburger steak smothered with hot dogs. When I dreamt we were going to have fried eggs galore for breakfast it was too much for me and I woke up. Just 2:00 A.M. instead of breakfast time so back to sleep I went and slept soundly the rest of the night. Maybe we'll have eggs for breakfast.”

Wednesday, December 9, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Nope, no eggs. We had more of that lousy British sausage again. It's still raining. I still have that BLANKETY BLANK headache and I got soaking wet again out at the planes. At 10:00 I changed into some dry clothes and finished that letter to Bobbie that I began last night. Ate a fairly large lunch today. Macaroni and corn willie with dog biscuits and tea. Make-shift spaghetti made two pretty good meals today. Swapped a pack of putrid British cigarettes for a pack of Camels OH! BOY. My headache just about went away so I had my workout after supper. Then cooked myself a hot cup of coffee and wrote to Bobbie. I wrote in style tonight even after lights out. Made me a desk out of a hunk of plywood, radiator and two pup tent poles. I have two almost new batteries in my flashlight so that is my desk lamp. We had an air raid alarm this afternoon but no raiders. 10:00 P.M. received orders to pack up and be ready to leave by transport at 8:00 A.M. if the weather clears. I didn't want to pack in the dark so went to sleep.”

Thursday, December 10, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

“Up at 6:00 A.M. and began packing. Ate breakfast at 6:30 and then finished packing and was ready to go at 7:45 A.M. It's still drizzling out and the ceiling is low so we won't be taking off for a while anyway. Supposed to take off at 12:30 and five out of nineteen ships were loaded when they called off the flight on account of bad weather. The ceiling is right down almost to the bottom of the mountains and it's starting into rain again as it has been doing for the last couple three days. So we won't be flying to our air echelon today. At 3:00 I hopped a truck to town and got my other six pictures and also the negatives at 20 francs apiece. I thought for a while today

that I'd just lose those pictures and the prepaid 75 francs. So after supper I unrolled my roll again then went out to one of the ships until about 9:30 P.M. We're supposed to leave out of here tomorrow. Wrote one sheet to Bobbie then to sleep."

Friday, December 11, 1942 (Diary of Francis Kalinowski)

"Up at 5:15 for air raid alert which lasted about 20 minutes. I began rolling up my stuff right then. Breakfast at 6:00 and out to transports at 6:30. I guess I walked two miles around the field before I found the ship my group was going in. I finally did. We took off from Blinda at 8:50 A.M. Flew along north shore of Africa to Oran then cut over xc (sic) to Oujda. Landed at Oujda at 11:00 A.M. Lugged my bags about ½ mile then saw Al and Chuck and ate chow with them. This here is like a big family reunion and everyone is greeting everyone. The air and ground echelons of the whole group are getting together here. I've been so busy that I haven't even unrolled my sleeping roll until after dark and then I was ready for some sleeping."