

Italian Operational Group,

Mission: walla walla

Mission:

Contact partisans in the Ligurian region near the Port of Genoa; serve and operate with them against the enemy, and conduct liaison between the partisans and Allied Armies Italy (AAI).

Summary:

WALLA WALLA with 2 officers and 13 enlisted men left Brandisi Airport Italy in three aircraft at 2100 hours 11 August 1944 for drop zone (DZ) MONTE AIONA. Section parachuted onto the DZ early morning 12 August with minor injuries sustained by some jumpers due to the rough terrain. The reception otherwise was excellent and included a partisan doctor, a partisan division commander and OSS SI team LOCUST who arranged the reception. The section, with their equipment, travelled by motor transport to the Sixth Zone Partisan Headquarters to which it would be attached for the mission.

WALLA WALLA was the first OG mission into Italy to work with partisans in enemy held territory and found themselves in a much different situation than had been expected. Briefings for the mission had suggested that the section would be involved with a small band of partisans with whom they would be involved operationally after they supplied them with the necessary arms and other equipment and training. As the reception demonstrated, that was not the case. They were in an area of the mountains which the locals considered as "liberated Italy" - from which Nazi-Fascists had been driven out; where the partisans reportedly numbered approximately 6000. They were in a position to harrass the German lines of communication but they needed arms and other equipment plus organization and training.

After several weeks working with various partisan groups to which WALLA WALLA had provided aerial supply of equipment and training, Captain Wheeler concluded that the groups should be unified under a single command and uncooperative units should be disarmed. He then arranged a general conference which included all division and brigade commanders of the area and representatives of the Committee for National Liberation (CNL). At that conference the Sixth Zone Command was established, to which the WALLA WALLA section was accepted as staff members. However, by partisan request, the OGs were not to be involved in partisan operations against the enemy.

As the various partisan units received supplies and training, and the frequency of their activities against the enemy increased, enemy responses forced the Sixth Zone Headquarters to move often. Finally, on 12 December the Germans mounted a "rastrellamento" (mop up) that brought in reinforcements which included armor and artillery. Recognizing the size of that effort was beyond partisan abilities to fight, it was finally agreed the partisans should bury their arms and disband, at least temporarily; and WALLA WALLA should return to Allied territory.

When that decision was made, the section had served in the field for nineteen weeks, having accomplished much in organizing, equipping and training the partisans. And during that period the partisans had conducted a significant number of actions against the enemy. While reports of enemy killed in action and other operational successes were made, there was no opportunity before WALLA WALLA's departure to make a formal collective report. But the magnitude of the enemy's December response attested to the overall effectiveness of the partisan actions.

During the period WALLA WALLA was in the field, in addition to arranging for over 100 tons of aerial supply of arms, ammunition and other equipment needs, supervise its distribution, train the partisans, and participate in the organizational activities with the partisans, the section performed the following:

- a. Guided partisans in operations targetted by OG Headquarters and AAI.
- b. Reported to OG Headquarters daily, tactical information of enemy dispositions and movements; and identified possible bombing targets.
- c. Established cooperation with British Major Lett, Fourth Zone Liaison Officer, a channel for downed airmen, POWs and OSS agent couriers to return to Allied control.

On 21 December 1944 the section headed for Allied lines, arriving at the US ARMY 92nd Infantry Division at Azzano on 26 December 1944.

Summary compiled by Caesar Civitella and Art Frizzell from EOM reports from the National Archives and a book published by the Society E Istituzioni, which was prepared for an OG/ Italian reunion held in Venice, Italy on 17-18 October 1994

Personnel:

Capt William C. Wheeler Jr.
1st Lt Quayle Smith
T/Sgt Angelo Galante
Cpl John Uccellini
Cpl Chester Scerra
Cpl Frederick Marchese
T/5 Joseph Alfieri
T/5 Thomas Cossuto
T/5 Cosmo Mangogna
T/5 Arthur Ruoizzi
T/5 Arthur Roberta
T/5 Patric Scoleri
T/5 Hugo Collacicco
T/5 Charles Lotito
T/5 Ermenio DiSano

(dal sito web www.ossog.org)