



Keith W. Mason. *My War in Italy: On the Ground and in Flight with the 15th Air Force.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015. 216 pp. \$32.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8262-2059-2.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

This engaging memoir charts Keith Mason's wartime flying career from his experiences in flight school through his brief stint as a flight instructor to his service as a B-24 bomber pilot based in Spinazzola in southern Italy. Mason's account offers an insight into the range of missions undertaken by the Italy-based 15th Air Force—often overshadowed by the more well-known 8th Air Force based in Britain—as he and his crew attacked targets in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the oil-fields of Romania as well as in southern France and Germany. There are a number of illuminating nuggets in the text. These include a graphic description of the long and dangerous series of flights from the United States to Italy via Trinidad, northern Brazil, Senegal, and Tunis, during which Mason's squadron got shot up by an Allied convoy, clashed with a British base commander, and lost aircraft to bad weather on the last leg of the journey. As part of the process of US base construction that was going on around the world, Mason describes the “housing boom” as the officers and men of the 460th Bombardment Group set about improving their accommodations and developing relations with the local population (p. 199). Finally, the book charts the arc of Mason's own passage from enthusiastic trainee to war-weary veteran, culminating in a 1998 tourist visit to Italy during which the former bomber pilot empathizes with

the Italian citizens forced to endure Allied aerial bombardment.

Despite these enlightening and entertaining moments, however, from a scholarly point of view this book does not add a great deal to our overall understanding of the air war in the Mediterranean. Mason's descriptive vignettes certainly add texture and depth, but a reader looking for big-picture description will go elsewhere. Unfortunately, the book's value as a scholarly source is also compromised by the lack of an index.

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