

# 8

## ***Operations: March, 1944***

**A**NZIO BEACH-HEAD, ITALY - MISSION NO. 152 - MARCH 2, 1944  
Twenty-one aircraft dropped 30.24 tons of 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on German troop concentrations two miles beyond the bomb line and 7 and one-half miles south-southeast of Albano. Flak was moderate to intense and accurate resulting in the loss of A/C #42-5779, 96th Squadron. Two men were missing from the crew and five were injured during ditching. Fourteen other B-17s were damaged by flak.

2nd Lt. Benjamin E. Nabers drowned while trying to rescue S/Sgt. William E. McNichol, who was also lost. The injured were: 2nd Lt. Robert A. Brienza, N, suffered from exposure and minor back injury; 2nd Lt. Thomas R. Degan, P, laceration of index finger caused by shattered plexiglass; 2nd Lt. William (NMI) Popoff, B, mild flak wound, right arm; S/Sgt. Thomas M. Moriarity, LT, back injury; and Colonel Elmer J. Rogers, Jr., CO, 456th bomb Group, Observer, loss of small toe, left foot, from flak.

Eight surviving men of the crew returned to Base, March 5, 1944. Colonel Rogers, after hospitalization, returned to his command.

### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-5779 - "LEAKIN' LENA" - 96TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Thomas R. Degan, 0-684497, P.	(RESCUED)
2nd Lt.	Benjamin E. Nabers, Jr., 0-802772, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	Robert A. Brienza, 0-672933, N.	(RESCUED)
2nd Lt.	William (NMI) Popoff, 0-688522, B.	(RESCUED)
T/Sgt.	James M. Turner, 12049370, U/T.	(RESCUED)
S/Sgt.	Thomas M. Moriarity, 12169379, L/T.	(RESCUED)
S/Sgt.	William E. McNichol, 33225737, R/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Henry (NMI) Macias, 38953418, L/W.	(RESCUED)
S/Sgt.	Anthony J. Sikole, 35421737, T/G.	(RESCUED)
T/Sgt.	Julius H. Bridges, 398199664, R/O.	(RESCUED)
Colonel	Elmer J. Rogers, Jr., 0-16622, Observer	(RESCUED)

S/Sgt. Thomas M. Moriarty, Ball Turret Gunner on B-17 #42-5779. November 14, 1990: "When I joined up, my name was spelled wrong and I was never able to straighten it out. They slipped in another "I" and so all my records show my name as Moriarity. I would like to describe two of my most memorable missions.

"On February 24, 1944, we took off for Steyr, Austria loaded with 12, 500-lb. bombs. 'Leakin' Lena' led a formation of 17 planes. My pilot was 1st Lt. Talmadge W. Trevathane. All seemed well until jumped by German fighters; 109s, 190s, etc., approximately 100 or more, I guess. We ran a battle

to the target, losing all the 49th Squadron planes and many others from the 96th. We, our wave, went over the target with five ships. Our radio operator, T/Sgt. Julius Bridges, was wounded.

"We came off the target and fighters jumped us again. I believe at this time, two or three from the 20th Squadron went down. After a few minutes, they left, pursued by P-38s that heard of our trouble and came back from the front of the other Groups, to help us. We had very few planes left and all bunched up to get back home.

"We had one engine out. I was credited with a probable and "Cy," S/Sgt. Macias, got credit for a probable Me-109. I don't know what the mission report said, but felt we had damaged some others. Our tail gunner, S/Sgt. Walker, should have had some probables, or a kill. This was my 47th mission.

"They finally got me today. We were laying around in our tents waiting to go on that last 50th. Days, hours, minutes went by and after five days since our last mission, on the 6th day, March 2nd, 1944, we climbed aboard 'LEAKIN' LENA' for the final one, 50th. Target: Troop concentrations at the Anzio Beach-head.

"We took off, loaded with frag bombs and headed for Anzio. We went out to sea, turned and flew up the coast to turn into our objective. By this time, we had climbed to 19,500 feet and bombing altitude for this mission. The I.P. came up and bomb bay doors swung open. No evasive action was taken. It seemed like an eternity before the bombs dropped and instantly we were hit by flak, again and again. Two engines were hit and running away, both on the right side. The nose was hit and partially blown away. Colonel Rogers was hit.

"I came out of the ball turret, snapped on my chute and began, with others, to prepare to bail out. Seconds later, the word came to prepare to ditch. We started throwing everything out that was not nailed down. We then began to assemble in the radio room to follow the ditching procedure. The plane was shaking like a jackhammer.

"Colonel Rogers announced that his foot was shot apart. Then things started to happen fast. Word came from the radio operator that the trailing antenna ball had hit the water. We braced ourselves for the crash. We hit very hard and came to a stop at once. Degan and Nabers did a hell of a job! Water was rushing in fast, the dinghy rods were pulled and we started sinking. I was second last one out and water was up to my neck as I stepped out and down to the wing. I found that it wasn't there and before the undertow pulled me down, I saw Red McNichol standing on the upturned wing. I popped out of the water and made for the dinghy about 20 yards away. We all made it except Red McNichol.

"We saw him in the water about 100 yards away. Ben Nabers said he was a good swimmer and was going after him. It looked like Red was hanging onto a ration box. Nabers was told it was useless to go after him but he went anyway. He got out a ways from the dinghy and seemed to stop to grab something and call out to McNichol but there was no response. We just kept drifting away very fast; the water was rough and cold.

"We began to collect ourselves and make the Colonel comfortable. We started to lay out a marker beacon and got the flare pistol ready, strapped the two dinghies together. We were hoping our 'May Day' was heard.

"We could see an island in the distance so for something to do, we started to paddle. We just seemed to bob around in the swells. We scanned the sky and saw some B-24s fly by on the way to the beach-head.

"Suddenly we saw a plane flying low over the water. We got our white scarves off and started waving only to find it was a Me-410. We hugged the bottoms of the dinghies and prayed that he didn't see us. He flew within 100 yards of us and continued on by.

"Someone then spotted a British 'Wimpy' Wellington bomber circling on the horizon. He just kept making circles, larger and larger. By now, almost four hours had gone by. The 'Wimpy' finally

made a big swing and we shot up a flare. In seconds he was dropping flares around us and in less than a couple of minutes, a British Air-Sea-Rescue boat was along side of us.

"They pulled us aboard, put us in dry clothes, gave us a big mug of rum. We started a search for the other two members. After awhile we gave up so as to get the Colonel aboard a British destroyer. We then searched some more for our two lost crew members but to no avail.

"The rescue crew took us to the Island of Ponza where we were fed. We were all treated for shock and exposure. I was treated for back injuries. Lt. Brienza also for back and neck injuries. He seemed to be in bad shape and extreme pain. Lt. Popoff and Lt. Degan for injuries also. Colonel Rogers was hospitalized for wounds to his foot. I heard later he lost a toe.

"The next morning we were all taken to the mainland, Naples. Lt. Brienza and myself were taken to a station hospital. Three days later I was released and returned to Base to wait for a ticket home.

"Over the years I often wondered if I wasn't entitled to the Purple Heart for my injuries. I have received a disability pension. Records of my injury, from the hospitals, probably were never forwarded to my Squadron, or fell in a crack somewhere after I shipped out to the States. It was a tough way to get my 50th."

Major Alvin H. Nurre was a First Pilot in the 429th Squadron and flew A/C #42-29617 overseas to the Squadron's first Base in North Africa. October 16, 1990: "I was the Operations Officer for the 363rd Squadron, 304th Bomb Group under our first Commanding Officer, Dick Weitzenfield, at Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington, and then down at Ephrata, Washington. Dick and I selected the flying officers for the 363rd which eventually became the 96th Squadron while still at Ephrata. I was transferred to the 429th Squadron as Operations Officer while at Glasgow, Montana, and then was serving as Operations Officer of the 429th, in Italy during the February 20/25th period.

"I was not scheduled to fly that week. I had completed my 49th mission and was waiting for my promotion to Major before flying my 50th mission and being sent home. I recall that the atmosphere was very somber after the Steyr raid, especially in the 49th, which had lost all seven of their aircraft in the formation, and the 96th, who had lost five. The 20th was fortunate in losing only two. Major Walter Kutschera, Commanding Officer of the 429th, flew Group lead that day and were extremely fortunate that our fighters picked up the Group shortly after coming off the target, saving the Group from further losses.

"I then completed my 50th mission, 2 March, 1944, which was the Group's 153rd mission. The mission was to bomb German troop concentrations inland from the Anzio Beachhead. At that time the beach-head reportedly was in doubt and all heavy bombers were used to support the ground troops. The flak was heavy. One plane from the 96th was hit by flak and forced to ditch off the coast of Italy. Two lives were lost, one being the co-pilot who attempted to save one of the gunners, unable to reach the life rafts that had been deployed from the plane.

"Shortly after completing my 50th mission, I received my orders to return to the United States. I returned to civilian life in 1946 but remained in the Reserves until I retired in 1979."

#### **ROME, ITALY - MISSION NO. 154 - MARCH 3, 1944**

Nineteen aircraft dropped 56.45 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Littorio Marshalling Yards in Rome. Cameras recorded considerable damage to tracks and rolling stock. Many fires and explosions were reported. No flak, no fighters. Crews were cautioned to avoid bombing religious shrines and cultural centers.

### **BRESLAU, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 155 - MARCH 4, 1944**

Sixteen aircraft took off to bomb the city of Breslau where a German Headquarters and manufacturing industries were located. The Group was called back by 5th Wing Headquarters after a flight of three hours, because of weather.

### **TOULON, FRANCE - MISSION NO. 156 - MARCH 7, 1944**

Twenty aircraft took off to bomb submarine pens at Toulon. None of the planes got to the target, running into weather they could not penetrate. No flak was encountered but the Group was attacked by Me-109s and FW-190s. This action caused severe damage to two B-17 aircraft and severe shrapnel wounds in the shoulder of S/Sgt. William C. Bunting, TG, 429th Squadron. Several planes ran short of fuel and were forced to make emergency landings of fields on Corsica and Sardinia. Fortress gunners claims were: Each credited with a probable destruction of an FW-190 were S/Sgt. William C. Bunting, TG, and S/Sgt. Harold G. Bascomb, RW, 429th Squadron. Credited with probable destruction of a Me-109 was S/Sgt. Francis K. Reilly, LW, 429th Squadron.

### **PADUA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 157 - MARCH 11, 1944**

Twenty aircraft dropped 60 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on Marshalling Yards on the west side of Padua. Confusion over the target resulted in two runs being made on the target. The first time over, the rear half of the Group dropped its bombs while the forward half did not for fear of dropping bombs on another Group on a different axis of attack. The whole Group went over the target a second time and the forward half bombed.

This left the Group at the rear of the Wing bomber formation with no escort, and it was jumped by 30 to 40 Me-109s, Ma-202s, Ju-88s, and FW-190s. The attacks were aggressive with some E/A firing rockets as well as 20 mm cannon. Fighters caused the loss of two B-17s, injury to two men and damage to seven other B-17s.

Photos showed considerable damage in the north yards and direct hits on repair sheds and warehouses. One large explosion was reported. There was no flak over the target but slight inaccurate flak was encountered near Venice that damaged three B-17s.

T/Sgt. Shelbourne M. Cholson, Upper Turret Gunner from the 49th Squadron, suffered a moderately severe scalp laceration from 20mm cannon fire. S/Sgt. John J. Kilgalen, Ball Turret gunner, also from the 49th Squadron, suffered moderately severe lacerations on the left knee from 20mm cannon fire.

B-17 #42-5145, 96th Squadron, and #42-31429, 429th Squadron, are missing.

Fortress gunners claims are: Each credited with destruction of a Me-109 were S/Sgt. Richard L. Luksch, UT, 20th Squadron; S/Sgt. Donald M. Byrd, TG; S/Sgt. Benjamin F. Sheckles, Jr., LW; and a joint claim, S/Sgt. Cleo L. Corley, TG, with S/Sgt. Virgil (NMI) Lazar, LT, 96th Squadron. Credited with the destruction of a FW-190 was T/Sgt. Oscar H. Eberle, UT, 429th Squadron. Credited with the probable destruction of a Me-109 was S/Sgt. Cleo L. Corley, TG, 96th Squadron. Each credited with the probable destruction of a FW-190 were T/Sgt. Robert F. Sykes, UT, and S/Sgt. William L. Tucker, LW, 96th Squadron

### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-5145 - 96TH SQUADRON**

2nd Lt. William F. Peters, Jr. 0-803860, P.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Fred W. Penn, 0-751753, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt. William J. Staugas, 0-811997, N.	(DED)
T/Sgt. Raphel (NMI) Rose, 36519831, TOG.	(DED)
T/Sgt. Turner W. Pickrel, Jr. 33212621, U/T.	(DED)



S/Sgt.	Charles R. Mercier, 11067985, L/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Charles N. Olsen, 39092260, R/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	George F. Steinheuser, 12127934, L/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Hans R. Wenzel, 14076777, T/G.	(DED)
T/Sgt.	Edward R. Spriggs, 13102164, R/O.	(DED)

Statement of S/Sgt. Virgil (NMI) Lazar, UT on B-17 #42-24361, after the mission: "I heard the pilot call out over the intercom to keep an eye on #145. It was several minutes before I could see the plane. It passed beneath us going from 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock, losing speed and altitude. I could see a big hole about two feet in diameter between No. 1 and No. 2 engines and fire pouring out behind the hole. I followed it until it was about 1,000 yards behind us and P-47s started to circle it, then the flames flared up three times its normal size. I counted five parachutes, which opened in rapid succession. Then the left wing seemed to crumble and the plane went into a left hand dive. I counted three more chutes, which blossomed above the plane as it was diving down. That was the last I saw."

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31429 - 429TH SQUADRON**

2nd Lt.	Joseph F. Senta, 0-680520, P.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	Frank J. Kirkland, 0-680914, CP.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	George (NMI) Lund, 0-674213, N.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	William J. Johnson, 0-679586, B.	(EVADED)
T/Sgt.	Emile H. Carle, 36336075, U/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Floyd M. LeMaster, 37459619, L/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Freeburn R. Jones, 39370139, R/W.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Herman J. LeGrand, 36413258, L/W.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Carl V. Anderson, 33302129, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Frank J. Knoble, 13042359, R/O.	(EVADED)

Statement of T/Sgt. Frank J. Knoble, R/O, after evading: "S/Sgt. Anderson bailed out with the rest of the crew northwest of Krim, Yugoslavia. The plane had been badly damaged and our pilot had given the order to bail out. We in the waist were having trouble trying to jettison the waist door and Sgt. Anderson was afraid to go out his escape door for fear we would get the door jettisoned at the time he went out and the door would strike him. So he came forward to go out the waist door after we got it torn off.

"All of the crew had jumped, with the exception of Sgt. Anderson, and the pilot looked from his position in the forward part of the plane and Sgt. Anderson was sitting in the doorway of the waist as if he intended to slide out. Lt. Senta motioned for him to go ahead and he stepped up to nose the ship down a little so that it would crash right away and then he stepped out the nose hatch. He said after his chute opened he looked around and saw Sgt. Anderson's body falling and his chute unopened.

"We were picked up by some Yugoslavia Partisans right after we got down. They told us they had found the body of our comrade, his chute unopened. They told us they buried him that night in an old church cemetery. None of us saw the body, however, one of the members could speak some English and Lt. Senta could speak their language so we could converse with them. We came to the conclusion when Sgt. Anderson sat down in the waist door, the slip stream jerked his legs around and threw his head into the side of the waist door, knocking him out and he did not regain consciousness in time to pull the ripcord. He apparently was as calm as any of us and he talked to us on the interphone in a normal way."

2nd Lt. George (NMI) Lund, N on A/C #42-31429, January 21, 1991: "My first mission with the 429th was on December 9, 1943 and the target was Ferrara, Italy.

"February 20, 1944, after a flight of 2:30 hours, we were called back.

"February 24, 1944, we were to go to Steyr, Austria, but after a flight of one hour, we found that an oxygen cable was caught in the ball turret so we aborted.

"The next day we flew a diversionary mission to Zara while the long range bombers went to Regensburg. As I recall, this mission was uneventful.

"March 11th we went to Padua, Italy. It was my 22nd mission. Our aircraft was a B-17G, #42-31429. After making a second pass at the target, we were hit by rockets, affecting control of the ship, and making it impossible to navigate. It was pointed at Yugoslavia so I told the pilot, Joe Senta, that as soon as we reached the coast of Yugoslavia we should bail out since it was impossible to land there because of the rough terrain.

"Upon reaching the coast, I was the first to bail out. After looking up at the plane and seeing no one bail out, I believed it might be possible that they would make it back home, but then all the parachutes came out.

"I landed in a tree on a farm. Partisan farmers helped me down and assisted with recovering my chute from the tree. They took me to a small frame country Church where I was met by the priest. With the help of a French-English dictionary, we were able to converse. He told me we were in Partisan territory and they would come and take care of me.

"They took me to a lighthouse on the coast and that is where eventually the rest of the crew were assembled. Joe Senta and our co-pilot, Lt. Frank Kirkland, each had a broken leg and others in the crew had minor injuries. The Partisans carried food on their backs, which included flour for their survival.

"We traveled to a different spot each day. I would carry Joe or Frank on my shoulders. One day an American came out of the woods in an olive drab uniform and offered us American cigarettes. He told us we would be taken care of.

"The Yugoslavians were allowed to fish, so it was not uncommon for some fishing boats to be in the waters. Eventually, after five or six days, we sailed to the Island of Vis, in the Adriatic, occupied by the British. We stayed for one night and the Brits came the next night and motored us to Bari, Italy, where we were debriefed and sent back to Foggia."

Sgt. Harold "Red" Kronenberg was the ball turret gunner on the crew of Lt. Robert F. Cleesattel, 96th Squadron. January 31, 1991: "After completing gunnery training at Las Vegas, Nevada, I was assigned to MacDill Field A.F.B. near Tampa, Florida. Our plane was the Martin bomber, nicknamed the 'Flying Coffin.' Because of the enormous number of accidents with this 'hot' plane, a saying, 'One a day in Tampa Bay' seemed quite appropriate. Needless to say I was quite relieved to be assigned to a B-17 outfit in Dalhart, Texas. I was assigned to Bob Cleesattel's crew and remained with him for most of my combat military experience, although other crew members changed frequently.

"Eventually we ended up in North Africa. In October, 1943, we were assigned to the 2nd Bomb Group. Soon afterwards we transferred to Manfredonia, near Foggia, Italy. We were located in a grove of olive trees and lived in 16' x 16' pyramid tents. Life was rather simple. It was cold so we devised a 'burner pot' fueled with 100 octane gas run through hydraulic lines cannibalized from crashed airplanes. This served us quite well to keep us warm, but quite a few fellows walked around with blue ointment on their faces, a testimony to their carelessness to lighting fires.

"The briefings before missions were held in a large, underground cave referred to as the catacombs. This cave also doubled as our theater where movies were shown once or twice a week. Since we were in an occupied country and some native Italians were still hostile, it was difficult to get a pass from camp. One thing that stands out in my mind after all these years, is the extreme poverty of

the people there. The very young and the very old would stand in line at the mess tent garbage cans and ask for scraps.

"While I was with the 2nd Bomb Group, I flew 21 missions, mostly as a ball turret gunner. A real 'milk run' was the much publicized bombing of the monastery at Monte Cassino. One of our most gratifying missions was when we helped our infantry at Anzio by bombing the 'Krauts' with fragmentation bombs from an altitude of 12,000 feet. The flak at that altitude was obviously very accurate and devastating.

"My most memorable mission was when we hit Padua, in the Udine area of Northern Italy. Our fighter escort left us as soon as we hit the Adriatic. Immediately we were jumped by 18 FW-190s. It was easy to count them because they were all in groups of six. They dropped their wing tanks, the only time I saw wing tanks on German fighters, and attacked. After the initial attack, they queued up and attacked again. This was repeated several times. The attacks were well coordinated and made from the tail, which seemed rather strange since we did not yet have many B-17s with the chin turret. If my memory serves me right, we lost two bombers and several badly damaged. The enemy lost six fighters. Eighteen may not sound like many fighters to the 390th, but remember, all 18 were concentrating on only 36 of the heavies. We flew in much smaller numbers in Italy than in England.

"In March, 1944, our crew was sent to England and assigned to the 390th at Framingham. We were exchanged for another crew who were sent to Italy. The purpose we were told was to make a comparison between the different theaters of operation. We were also told by some that we were going from the minor leagues to the big leagues. I thought at the time that if this would be tougher in the 8th Air Force, I certainly would never finish my tour of duty.

"When we got to England, we found that they had just raised the number of missions to 30. In Italy the magic number was 50. I had flown 21 with the 15th and was told I would receive credit for 10.

"I soon learned that things were strikingly different than they were in Africa and Italy. The large number of planes involved required much longer to assemble.

"In Italy, crew members took combat positions as soon as possible after being airborne, because it was common practice for German fighters to attack close to our airfields. We also attempted to assemble while on the way to the target. Test firing of our guns was done over land or not at all, while in England it was always done over the English Channel. While flying from England we did not become seriously alert until we neared the French coast. The missions from England were generally longer in duration and usually saw more enemy fighters, but must remember that there were also many more B-17s involved.

"Our living conditions at Framingham were more civilized. We had Quonset huts equipped with bunks and mattresses made of 'biscuits.' The gasoline fueled pots in Italy were replaced by coal burning stoves that proved safer and steadier. No more blue ointment. The bicycles (wheels) were in abundance and the people were friendly. We were always welcomed in the local pubs. Passes were occasionally available allowing us to visit London and Piccadilly Circus. Buzz bombs were plentiful, and on occasion, a German plane showed up. The buzz bombs were non-existent in Italy, but the German planes were seen frequently.

"In Italy there was no prior prediction as to whether we would fly the following day or not. In the 570th Squadron, they had a unique way to tell us the status of the next day's operations. A red, white or blue flag was flown. The blue flag meant we were definitely flying the next day, the white flag meant we were not flying the next day and the red flag meant alert for a possible mission the next day.

"Like most members of a bomber crew, I vividly recall my last mission, my 41st. The date was June 5, 1944, one day before D-Day. As our plane flew across the channel, hundreds of ships were visible below. They appeared to be half way across the channel and seemed to be of every shape and size. What a beautiful sight!! It was obvious that the long awaited invasion was imminent. I couldn't

help at that moment to reflect that I was finished with my part of fighting the war but the men below were just beginning, and perhaps the success of the mission would be the end of Hitler's 'Hotshots.'

"After 46 years it is difficult to remember all the things that took place, but I do remember most of the targets bombed by our crew. Those include most of the capitals. We hit Sofia, Bulgaria; Bucharest, Hungary; Vienna, Austria; Rome, Italy (airfields); Paris, France; and Berlin, Germany on five occasions. Not so easy are the names of our planes our crew flew in. We never named our own plane. I remember flying in 'Rigor Mortis,' the plane that almost got cut in two by a German Messerschmitt, and was repaired. While with the 390th, we flew in 'Clay Pigeon,' 'Mister Completely,' 'G.I. Wonder,' and several others."

T/Sgt. James L. Weaver was the RO on the crew of Lt. Robert F. Cleesattel. January 31, 1991: "This is a reply to your letter through the Veterans Administration Processing Center. You don't know how good I feel hearing from someone in the 15th A.F. and especially from you because only two weeks ago I was thinking about my time in Italy and wondering how I could get in touch with any of my old crew members. Then I had a wonderful Christmas present! Last Saturday I received a telephone call from Harold Kronenberg. I presume he got my number from you. He had been trying to contact me for over 20 years. His voice sounded the same as it did 46 years ago.

"In addition to Lt. Cleesattel, my original crew were: 2nd Lt. Charles T. Dicksen, Co-Pilot; 2nd Lt. Richard H. Chapman, Navigator; 2nd Lt. George H. Crank, Bombardier; T/Sgt. Robert F. Sykes, Upper Turret; S/Sgt. Harold J. Kronenberg, Ball Turret; S/Sgt. Fred S. Huskins, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. William L. Tucker, Waist Gunner; and S/Sgt. David C. Scott, Tail Gunner.

"I flew 18 missions with the 2nd Bomb Group after which we were transferred to the 8th A.F. in England and flew 19 missions with the 390th Bomb Group. I did not keep a very detailed diary, but did note each mission in a small book, with basic information such as target, how much flak, how many fighters, results of the bomb run plus other notations.

"During the February 20th to 25th period, I flew one mission to Graz, Austria, then penciled in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. If memory serves me right, I believe the Group went to Graz to pull enemy planes away from Southern Austria (act as decoys) and when we arrived over the Graz area, it was so cloudy that we went to Zagreb. The main thrust of the Group was aimed at aircraft factories in Southern Austria. We felt like sitting ducks on the mission. They told us at briefing how good it would be if the Luftwaffe attacked us. However, the Germans weren't fooled and did attack the main thrust. We met very light, inaccurate flak, no fighters, and bombing results were unobserved due to overcast over the target. I did not make any notes about losses the rest of the Group may have sustained.

"S/Sgt. David Scott was replaced by Sgt. Jack Tansey while we were in North Africa and Lt. Crank was shot down while flying as a replacement on another crew on 1-24-44. He was replaced by 2nd Lt. Joseph Jaffee. When we were assigned to the 96th, our brand new plane was taken over by another older crew. It was one that had not been painted and we were told we were better off because enemy fighters, for some unknown reason, were concentrating on unpainted planes. It would stick out like a sore thumb and the enemy fighters would want to see what it could do.

"On March 11, 1944, I made my last mission to Padua, Italy. It was a milk run with light flak. We came back to base by way of the Adriatic and more than half way home we were jumped by 50 to 75 FW-190s. They lined up six abreast behind us in 10 or 12 waves, 1,000 yards behind each other. The first wave hit us and immediately knocked down a B-17 on our right and one on the left. We were in the middle of a six-plane formation. The three ships ahead of us had put their throttles to the fire wall. They had B-17G models and we had a slow, old clunker.

"Looking off to the right of our ship I saw our wing man go down. It was in a tight spin, all aflame, then there was a big black puff when it blew up and nothing was left. There were at least eight



chutes, one above the other. In the meantime, we were hit by wave after wave of 190s, but the tail gunner and belly gunner kept knocking down the middle planes in each wave. I could hear our pilot calling for our fighter escort to return. They headed back for home about 10 minutes before we were jumped.

"The three B-17s ahead of us were leaving us behind; we couldn't keep up. Everywhere I looked 20mm shells were exploding over the wings, tail, fuselage. Yet we never took one small hit. The only damage to our plane was inflicted in the horizontal stabilizer, by the tail gunners and myself trying to hit the fighters in the back. Some of our escort returned and the Luftwaffe broke off the attack.

"I quote from my notebook: 'Right waist gunner shot hoz. stabilizer, I shot radio antenna off. We got six fighters in 20 minute battle. Ship #145 shot down by fighters. Attempt to wipe out Luftwaffe continues with the 8th AF raiding Berlin.' Now I don't know what we were finally credited with but I knew we claimed five kills and one probable.

"One week later, after the March 11th mission, my crew was ordered to the 8th A.F., under some exchange of experience and ideas program. I don't mind saying that I felt reprieved when ordered to the 8th A.F. The way things were going, I knew there was no way we could survive 50 missions in Italy. As a new crew from the States, they broke us up and we flew our first couple of missions with combat experienced crews. One or two of us to each crew. It used to break my heart when crews were shot down with only one or two missions left.

"Did anyone ever talk about a spy in our area? I felt at that time there was a spy or some bad security leak on our base and still feel that way. Consider the following four events that occurred in about four weeks.

"On one mission, we were flying into Northern Italy. We were flying lead ship in the 96th and I was the lead radio operator. I received a recall from 'Glasshouse,' our base radio. We were about 30 to 40 minutes from target. I reported it to my pilot and told him the message was suspect because it was sent in plain language. I told him I could challenge the caller and was told to go ahead. I challenged the caller and he failed to answer with a secret letter that changed every half hour. The pilot decided to continue the mission and when we got back to base, found the recall was a fake. Somehow, the enemy had our code name 'Glasshouse' and radio frequency, which changed every day.

"Hitler was reported to be at his retreat in the Bavarian Alps and a mission was called to kill him. Two hours into the mission it was called off, the rumor being that he was tipped off we were coming and left the area.

"The Group had a Chapel in one of the wine caves near the farm where we were bivouacked. Another of the caves was fixed up as an NCO clubhouse. Men worked on it for weeks in their spare time. The day before it was to open, Axis Sally spoke over the radio and congratulated the men on their new NCO clubroom and that they were coming down the next night to give us a housewarming on our opening night. Instead they bombed Bari.

"We left the 96th on March 17th on a C-54, stopped at Sicily, Oran and arrived at Casablanca, March 19th. We stayed a while in Casablanca so were allowed to go into town in the evenings for some R & R. While we were there, our tail gunner, Jack Tansey, was attacked in the men's room of a bar by a big, blonde haired man who kicked, punched and stomped on his stomach until he was unconscious. All this time, the man kept asking him how he escaped from Yugoslavia, who helped him, how did he get across the Adriatic, etc? He kept repeating those questions over and over. As we later found out, one of the crews shot down over the Adriatic made it to Yugoslavia and Milhajlovic's Raiders helped them escape back to Italy to our base. They had left Italy the same day we did and this German agent mistook our crew for them. It was the policy to rotate a crew home that had been aided in escaping from enemy territory.

"We stayed an extra week in Casablanca until Jack recovered and then went on to England."

T/Sgt. Oscar H. Eberle, Flight Engineer, 429th Squadron. August 9, 1990: "On the 24th of February, 1944, on the mission to Steyr, Austria, I was flying on the crew of 2nd Lt. J. A. Gulik. As I recall, that was the mission when the 49th lost all their planes they put in the air that day. I think the Germans had everything in the air that could fly. Our escort picked us up as we headed for home. I remember all the cheering. Someone yelled, 'Here come the P-38s.' I thought it was like a cheer at a football game. I think it was about the biggest air battle of the war for the 15th AF. It was the biggest one I was in.

"One of my most memorable missions was to Padua, Italy on March 11, 1944. We went over the target twice and were jumped by German fighters after the second run. There were all kinds and they attacked from all directions, many were firing rockets. Our Squadron lost one plane and one was lost from another Squadron. I was credited with downing a FW-190.

"I completed my 50 missions. Two of them were double credit missions and both were to Steyr. My first mission was on July 29, 1943, and the last on April 2, 1944, to Steyr."

#### **CASSINO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 158 - MARCH 15, 1944.**

Twenty-two aircraft, led by Major Bradford A. Evans, dropped 66 tons of 1,000-lb. GP bombs on the town of Cassino in support of the 5th Army. Strike photos showed the area to be well covered. Flak was inaccurate and no E/A were encountered.

#### **SAN GIORGIO - MISSION NO. 159 - MARCH 15, 1944**

Captain Harold Chrishmon, Commanding Officer of the 20th Squadron, led 24 aircraft, each with a bomb load of six, 1,000-lb. GP bombs, in support of Allied troops. Due to a 10/10 cloud cover, no bombs were dropped and no credit was given for the mission.

#### **SAN GIORGIO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 160 - MARCH 16, 1944**

Captain Harold Chrishmon led 25 aircraft again in an attempt to bomb the town. Once again a 10/10 cloud cover prevented bombing the target even though a second run was made over the target.

#### **FISCHAMEND MARKET, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 161 - MARCH 27, 1944**

Captain William N. Byrd, Operations Officer, 429th Squadron, led 22 aircraft, with a bomb load of six, 1,000-lb. GP bombs, to bomb the Components Factory in this city. The Group got to within 60 miles of the target and ran into a 10/10 cloud cover. The Group circled several times but could not get through.

While circling, the Group was attacked by Me-109s, FW-190s, and Ju-88s. The attacks were aggressive and lasted for 20 minutes. Three men were injured and two planes damaged.

Injured were: Sgt. Eldon M. Stanton, RW, 96th Squadron, multiple lacerations on right ear; Sgt. William C. Hardin, TG, 96th Squadron, frost bite; and S/Sgt. Edgar F. Stevens, RO, 96th Squadron, frost bite of hands.

T/Sgt. Thomas W. Forbes, UT, 96th Squadron, was credited with destruction of a Me-109, and S/Sgt. L. M. Adams, LT, 96th Squadron, was credited with probable destruction of a FW-190.

The 775th Bombardment Squadron, 463rd Bombardment Group (H) was attached to the 2nd Bomb Group effective March 14, 1944. The air echelon had just arrived from the United States and was assigned to duty until its ground echelon arrived and the Base prepared for use. This Squadron was divided among the four Squadrons of the 2nd as follows: Three crews to the 20th, three to the 49th, four

to the 96th, and part of another to the 429th. The other three Squadrons of the 463rd Bomb Group were then attached to the other three veteran Groups of the 5th wing.

#### **VILLAORBA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 162 - MARCH 18, 1944**

Group Commander Herbert E. Rice led 23 aircraft and dropped 33.12 tons of 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on the Landing Ground at Villaorba. The 2nd bombed this target in conjunction with the 99th Bomb Group. P-47s of the 325th Fighter Group were to provide escort but were never seen.

Strike photos showed seven E/A destroyed and six damaged on the ground. There was good coverage on hangars, workshops, service building, construction facilities, and dispersal areas. Since the 99th Bomb Group participated, part of this damage could be credited to it.

Enemy fighters started attacking the formation 33 minutes before the target and then continued after bombs were dropped. They were aggressive and included Me-109s, Me-210s, FW-190s, and Ju-88s. Flak over the target was slight to moderate and very accurate. This combined resistance resulted in the loss of three B-17s, injury to two men and damage to other B-17s. Fortress gunners shot down four enemy planes. The wounded were: Captain Robert A. Davies, CP, 775th Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group, slight flak wound in upper right arm; 2nd Lt. Arthur Taylor, N, 775th Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group, lacerations of right cheek and forehead caused by flak which shattered plexiglass in nose.

B-17 #42-31749, 20th Squadron, was the victim of a rocket from a Ju-88. No one was seen to bail out. B-17 #42-29584, 429th Squadron, was last sighted about 25 miles north of Fiume, Italy being attacked by enemy planes. B-17 #42-24435, 429th Squadron, was last sighted in the same area as #584.

Each credited with destruction of a FW-190 were: S/Sgt. Orvel Buechner, UT, 20th Squadron; S/Sgt. Carl S. Zyzula, LT, 20th Squadron; and S/Sgt. Anthony R. Mancuso, TG, 49th Squadron. Credited with destruction of a Me-109 was S/Sgt. Kenneth Cook, RW, 96th Squadron.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31749 - 20TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Williard O. Butler, Jr. 0-381568, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Robert R. Drake, 0-748377, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Charles A. Evert, 0-811601, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Adam J. Pyzyna, 0-682590, B.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Martin C. Hutchinson, 12171711, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	James L. Hawton, 16161982, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Cantello H. Strickland, 39173361, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Andrew M. McCrossan, 13044526, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Horace B. Maddux, 38367547, T/B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Paul R. Henderson, 33568093, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of T/Sgt. Raymond L. Terrell, UT, 20th Squadron, after the mission: "When enemy fighters attacked our formation, eight Ju-88s came in from 6 o'clock, level. Four of them attacked our Squadron and the other four attacked No. 3. From a distance of approximately 600 yards, the Ju-88s began firing rockets at the formation. From what I observed, I would say that the enemy fired one rocket at a time and each fighter took turns in a right to left order. I believe the third or fourth rocket sustained a direct hit on the tail section of plane #749 and exploded on contact. The explosion destroyed the left horizontal stabilizer and most of the vertical stabilizer. Plane #749 immediately made a violent nose-up that resembled a chandelle. It then went into a falling leaf spin and I lost sight of it as it fell from my line of vision. I saw no chutes leave the ship."

# **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-29584 - "SAD SACK" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Clifford E. Magnuson, 0-745135, P.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	Theodore G. Lauterbach, 0-745120, CP.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	Raymond E. Horne, Jr., 0-694373, N.	(POW)*
2nd Lt.	Raymond R. McKee, 0-755031, B.	(POW)*
T/Sgt.	Albert E. Smith, 32299256, U/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Lawrence H. Meidl, 37316870, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Joe E. Ferguson, 34596984, R/W.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Leo C. Rossi, 13092063, L/W.	(EVADED)
Sgt.	Irle Parker, Jr., 17064887, T/G.	(EVADED)*
Sgt.	Vernon A. Jensen, 16088696, R/O.	(EVADED)*

\* Members of the 463rd Bombardment Group

Statement of 1st Lt. Clifford E. Magnuson, P, after evading: "We left the formation at approximately 10:10 a.m. and at 22,000 feet. Lt. Lauterbach left the plane through the forward hatch as did Lt. Horne, Lt. McKee, and Sgt. Smith. Sgt. Parker went out through the aft tail gunner hatch, Sgt. Jensen out the bomb bay, and Sgt. Rossi through the waist hatch. Sgt. Meidl's exit is unknown to me. After being disabled, I managed to meet up with six crew members within two weeks of the accident. Lt. Horne, POW in Germany and now released. This I received in a letter from Lt. Horne. Sgt. Meidl was found dead in the vicinity of the aircraft and this information was given to me by Partisan forces. Sgt. Rossi was in a Partisan hospital with a severe arm injury. The underground forces would not let me get in touch with him because of existing conditions.

"This would be about the only knowledge I can give about Sgt. Meidl. This was the first mission I had flown with any member of this crew. It was a mixed crew, some of them on their first mission.

"The mission was going as scheduled. Just before the accident, I heard over the radio that enemy fighters were coming in. They were messing up the Group behind us but didn't know until the first hit on our plane that they were in on us. None of the guns had fired up until this time. First we were hit on the right wing, the next, in the cockpit, hit the oxygen and hydraulic system, which caused the cockpit to become filled with flames almost instantly. I knew the flames could not be put out so slid out of formation so I could jettison the bomb load without hitting the following aircraft in the formation. When clear, I gave the order to bail out, both verbally and with the alarm bell in the plane. The plane was put on auto-pilot, which kept the plane on a straight course for several minutes after. I was the last to leave the forward end of the plane.

"From other members, who were in the aft end of the ship, they heard the command to bail out. They mentioned that Sgt. Meidl was up out of the ball turret and was the first to the exit hatch, but he seemed to be afraid to jump or could not get the hatch open. Just before Sgt. Parker left the plane he saw Sgt. Meidl and Sgt. Rossi just before the exit hatch and at that time two, what appeared to be 20mm cannon shells hit the aircraft at approximately their position. This is the last information that I could gather about Sgt. Meidl. Later I was guided through a Yugoslavian village, which was close to the vicinity of where the plane and Sgt. Meidl's body was found. Through broken English, and little knowledge of the foreign tongue, they told me that Sgt. Meidl had been found dead as soon as they reached him. They turned over to me a few personal belongings and identification tags, which I returned to Intelligence Army 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari, Italy. The location of Sgt. Meidl's grave was also given at that time.

"Due to conditions in that area where the accident took place, it was hard to find out much information. We were constantly on the move due to movement of enemy forces."



# **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-24435 - "YANKEE DO DIT" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Theodore (NMI) Griffith, 0-662447, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	William S. Doyle, 0-803790, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Walter L. Swan, 0-814439, N.	(POW)*
2nd Lt.	Allen A. Klute, 0-750706, B.	(POW)*
Sgt.	Stephen M. Murinchack, 32384207, U/T.	(KIA)*
S/Sgt.	Howard (NMI) Lamont, 32350647, L/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Nicholas A. Cannata, 32394228, R/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	Howard R. Chandler, 39122330, L/W.	(POW)*
S/Sgt.	Edward A. Greenlaw, 39186542, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Bernard E. McConnell, 37373173, R/O.	(EVADED)

\*Members of the 463rd Bombardment Group

Statement of 2nd Lt. Allen A. Klute, B, after liberation: "I bailed out in an area close to Trieste, Italy. Lt. Swan and Sgt. Chandler bailed out just north of Trieste. Both men broke their ankles and were taken prisoner. Two other Sgts. had been taken prisoner but do not recall their names. The Germans reported that the aircraft struck the ground a few miles north of Trieste and reported finding three bodies, two wearing dog tags of Lt. W. S. Doyle and Lt. Griffith. The other body had no identification. The Germans said the plane was completely destroyed and that they were in the wreckage."

Statement of S/Sgt. Edward A. Greenlaw, TG, after liberation: "We all bailed out with the exception of the pilot, co-pilot, and engineer, about 20 to 30 miles north of Trieste, Italy. Lt. Swan and Lt. Klute left via the nose hatch. McConnell went out the waist door first, then Cannata, then Chandler. I went out the tail hatch. I have no idea how the ball gunner got out but he escaped. I think that Lt. Griffith, Lt. Doyle, and Sgt. Murinchack were still in the aircraft.

"The following theory is based wholly on supposition. The pilot, Lt. Griffith, had been informed that a waist gunner had been hit and his parachute ruined. Although the pilot told the other waist gunner to put an extra chute on the injured man, he had no way of knowing it had been accomplished, nor had any way of getting acknowledgment from the crew that they had heard the bail-out bell as the intercom was out of commission and the passage to the flight deck was barred by fire. Therefore, I believe that the pilot, co-pilot, and engineer may have been attempting to make a crash landing under the impression that one or more of the crew might still be in the waist of the ship.

"As my chute opened, I saw a plane at a very low altitude but still evidently under control and level flight. It was trailing flame and smoke and suddenly it seemed to nose into the ground and burst into flames."

## **KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 163 - MARCH 19, 1944**

Captain Harold L. Chrishmon led 17 aircraft over the target and dropped 51 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Airdrome at Klagenfurt. The original target had been to bomb a ball bearing plant at Steyr, Austria, but a 10/10 cloud cover prevented the Group from penetrating the weather front.

Forty to 50 enemy planes attacked the formation in two waves. One Wave of 25 to 30 made a pass or two at the formation and then left to engage the escorting fighters. The Second Wave of 20 to 25 attacked the Group and continued for 48 minutes, just before the bombs were released. The E/A first lobbed rockets and then came in firing 20mm cannons, went under the formation and attacked again. Six E/A attacked #631, an early return, and then left to follow the other E/A. No. 631 was not hit and made no claims.

The 2nd Bomb Group was the last over the target and not many bomb strikes were visible due to smoke from previous bombings. Some damage was visible to residential areas at the southeast corner of the airdrome. Flak was reported as moderate to intense and accurate. B-17 #42-38100, 96th Squadron, was hit by flak, exploded and went down. One chute was seen.

B-17 #41-24405, 96th Squadron, was hit by fighters and went down. It was reported on fire but under control. Five to six chutes were reported.

B-17 #42-31446, 49th Squadron, was reported hit by rockets. Ten men bailed out.

B-17 #42-38143, 49th Squadron, collided with a plane of the 97th Bomb Group. Both planes crashed in the Bay of Manfredonia. Air-Sea-Rescue was called and found four bodies. They were:

2nd Lt. Frederick (NMI) Lawson, 0-753144, B.

Sgt. Richard (NMI) Goldsmith, 39379395, T/G.

Sgt. Robert (NMI) Bredesen, 16110678, L/W.

S/Sgt. Adam F. Sokolowski, 16143408, R/O.

Fortress gunners receiving credit for enemy aircraft were: Each claimed with destruction of a FW-190 were S/Sgt. William F. Corbin, RW, 20th Squadron; S/Sgt. Richard Gilbert, LT, 20th Squadron; and S/Sgt. William Kelly, TG, 429th Squadron.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31843 - 49TH SQUADRON**

2nd Lt. Keith M. Chambers, 0-748530, P. (DED)

F/O Melvin H. Wagner, T-1030, CP. (DED)

2nd Lt. Harold (NMI) Wolquitt, 0-694425, N. (DED)\*

2nd Lt. Frederick (NMI) Lawson, 0-753144, B. (DED)

S/Sgt. James L. Babek, 18191337, U/T. (DED)

Sgt. Albert D. Gricius, 36735934, L/T. (DED)

Sgt. Francis D. Delap, 17130373, R/W. (DED)

Sgt. Robert (NMI) Bredesen, 16111037, L/W. (DED)

Sgt. Richard (NMI) Goldsmith, 39379395, T/G. (DED)

S/Sgt. Adam F. Sokolowski, 16143408, R/O. (DED)

\*Member of the 463rd Bomb Group

Statement of S/Sgt. Richard C. Anderson, TG, 340th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group, after the mission: "Collision took place at 1035 hours at commencement of last turn. Aircraft #832 was in diamond position at about three minutes before collision, flying at 3,500 to 4,000 feet. Aircraft from 2nd Bomb Group came in and flew on #832's right wing, started to slide underneath him but slid into right wing of #832. Immediately the aircraft from the 2nd Bomb Group broke in half and fell. No. 832 banked off to the left, went down apparently out of control and hit the water. One chute was seen. The accident took place about three miles off shore."

M/Sgt. Earl M. Anderson, crew chief of B-17 #843, stated that B-17 #843 had started down the run-way for take-off, slowed down and returned to its revetment. The pilot asked M/Sgt. Anderson to remove the pitot tube cover, which he did. The pilot then taxied out and took off. This caused an approximate 15-minute delay.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38100 - 96TH SQUADRON**

2nd Lt. Clarence W. Southern, 0-684574, P. (KIA)

Captain Wilson E. Burrill, 0-417182, CP. (POW)\*

2nd Lt. Harry S. LaSalle, 0-811677, N. (POW)

2nd Lt.	Nemor Warr, 0-767989, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Thomas W. Forbes, 34172292, U/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Ascension (NMI) Gonzalez, 18163090, L/T.	(EVADED)
Sgt.	Walter M. Handy, 13032608, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Carl D. Coleman, 35717126, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	James (NMI) Beranek, 35513114, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Russell W. Phillips, 15048978, R/O.	(EVADED)

\*Member of the 463rd Bombardment Group

Statement of Sgt. Michael Nimirowski, Ball Turret Gunner on B-17 #42-5777, after the mission: "I saw #100 fall out of the formation and slip below and to the right of us, flying level. I saw one chute open a considerable distance below and behind the plane. When I looked up again, I saw the plane nose up and explode. I don't believe anyone else got out."

Statement of 2nd Lt. Harry S. LaSalle, Jr., N, after liberation: "We took a direct hit by an 88mm shell knocking out No. 3 and No. 4 engines and the right wing was on fire. After a complete 360-degree turn to the right, Lt. Southern recovered control and held the aircraft straight and level until nine other crew members bailed out. The plane was reported to have blown up.

Six crew members were captured in approximately the same spot and brought to a village police station. Lt. Southern, T/Sgt. Forbes, T/Sgt. Phillips, and S/Sgt. Gonzalez were not brought in. Nothing was learned of the fate of Lt. Southern, except hearsay evidence that the plane blew up before he could leave the plane. After talking to several former Squadron members, both in prison camp and after returning to the States, evidence is fairly certain that Lt. Southern is dead. Forbes, Gonzalez, and Phillips made it back to our lines."

Statement of T/Sgt. Thomas Forbes, Engineer on B-17 #42-38100, after evading: "I don't think Lt. Southern bailed out. I told him we got hit back of No. 3 supercharger. I was told later by Partisans that one man was found in the wreckage and I think it was Lt. Southern. The wreckage is just south of Klagenfurt, in the mountains. From where I landed, I could see Klagenfurt and smoke from the ship. It seems he was trying to put the fire out by slipping and diving and the wing broke off when pulling out of the dive."

S/Sgt. Ascension Gonzalez was the Ball Turret Gunner on the crew of Lt. Blomquist: June 1, 1990: "On the Steyr mission, February 24, 1944, only two Groups got through. The rest got called back. The radio man would come on and say, 'Group so and so is called back and it won't be long before we are called back.' Somewhere close to the target somebody called out 'Fighters' and I looked back and it looked like it was horizon to horizon with German fighters coming in on us. We waited for them to attack and someone said, 'Why don't they come in?' Well, the bombardier, Lt. Wilkinson, said, 'We are flying too good a formation, they don't want any part of us.' Well, that didn't last too long before they jumped us and started picking off planes in the third and fourth Squadrons. They were coming in wing-tip to wing-tip and every pass they made we lost a B-17. By the time we got to the target the flak started to hit us and the fighters fell off. We ended up with only two planes on each wing and they were not from our Squadron. So we got through the bomb run and a group of our fighters picked us up and we made it back to Base okay, but boy, that was a hairy experience and I thought it was going to be the end.

"The next day we had to go to Steyr (Regensburg) again and we were worried about it. But on the taxi-way going to the runway, I don't know what happened to the plane in back of us, but it spun

around and their right wing hit our vertical stabilizer and spun against us. Now I keep telling people that the propeller went through the fuselage of the plane while I was there on the catwalk. When all that noise started happening, I ran away from it toward the center of the plane. One of the waist gunners ran in the direction I was going and fell at the ball turret and I had two choices, to step on him and run over him, or fall on top of him. He tried to get up and I pushed his head down and got as low as I could. After it was all over, when I got up, I saw the propeller sticking through the side of the waist and all the others were at the escape hatch hollering, 'Got to bail out, got to bail out.' They had pulled the release on the escape hatch but the door didn't open so I reached between them and kicked the door and, of course, the door fell on the ground. A crew chief picked it up and ran off with it. And that was a hairy experience and something I think of a lot.

"Then of course the third one was when I was shot down. Lts. Blomquist, Maybee and Jeb Stewart had to go to North Africa to train on the B-17 that had radar, you know, where you could bomb through the clouds. The radar took my spot on the plane and I was excess baggage. So they transferred me to one crew that was made up of stragglers.

"Then the first mission I flew with them was when I was shot down. We were going to Steyr but the weather turned us back and we hit Klagenfurt, but I didn't know what the target was because I wasn't briefed on it. We had enemy fighters and we took care of them but we got into flak and got a direct hit by an 88 in the right wing behind No. 3 engine. I say a direct hit because I saw only one hole. I had felt this bump, saw the hole and reported it to the pilot and told him it was behind No. 3 supercharger. I told him he better feather the engine. Now either he didn't think it was a good idea or maybe he couldn't because he never feathered it. The gas emptied out of the tank real quick. I turned around looking at the bombing pattern, because it was my job to check out the pattern, when I heard someone holler, 'Fire in the bomb bay.' I turned around and we had a short blue blaze coming out of the wing. I put my guns down, opened the turret, got out and looked in the waist. Everyone was down by the waist hatch. I looked in the radio room and found a fire extinguisher and squirted it a time or two on the fire and it went out. Now I always thought I put the fire out but evidently the gasoline, that had leaked into the bomb bay, burned up and that was when the fire went out. I tried to get to the waist gunner's mike to radio to the pilot that the waist was clear but couldn't find the connections. Evidently he had taken them with him when he jumped. So I went to the escape hatch and just then the tail gunner appeared and I pointed to the escape hatch and out he went and after that, I jumped.

"Now we were told to count to ten before pulling the ripcord so when I left the plane, I counted to three and I said, 'that's a long time since I left the plane,' so I pulled the ripcord. Now I was so high up yet that the fighters were messing up the air and flipping me 15 degrees one way or another so I figured I would slip some air out of my chute. I got hold of some lines and pulled on them and the horizon flipped to 30 degrees so I turned loose of the lines and said to myself, 'I don't care if it takes all day to get down, I'm going to wait on it.'

"Because I was so high, I floated across a river and landed on top of a mountain. That is the first time I looked down on everything; everything was below me! I tried to get down off that mountain and couldn't do it. The snow was frozen and where I landed was on top of a tree. Now I don't know how tall that tree was, but when I kicked a hole in the snow to bury my chute I could look down the trunk. I don't know if that tree was 20 feet tall or 30 feet tall, but it was covered with snow. I buried my chute and I was walking around and hardly leaving any tracks because the snow was frozen. I went through a little dip in the snow, a little shallow place, and sank down to my knees, took a third step and fell all the way down to my waist. Now I don't know where I read the book or heard it but in this book it told you what you should do if you fell into quicksand. It said, you should fall on your back, raise up your legs, straighten them out and roll around on it and that is what I did. Boy, from then I was careful of every place I stepped.



"I couldn't get down off the peak of that mountain! I finally found some hoof tracks, deer, goat or something, and I thought, anywhere they can walk, I can walk and finally I followed them. Finally there was a gentle slope on the side of the mountain and the tracks were going down there, so I followed them. I was slipping and sliding and found that I couldn't do it. On one side of the mountain I found some soft snow and I dug me a hole in the snow and went to sleep. Now I don't know if I slept all night, or all day, or a few minutes, but I heard some noise and it woke me up. I could see these damn civilians following my tracks. I had thought the target we hit was a residential district and I thought the people were from there. They busted through the snow hollering what sounded like 'Egretski, Egretski' and one of them got hold of me and kissed me on both cheeks and I said to myself, 'This far from home and I ran across one of them.' As it happened, all of them kissed me on the cheeks.

"They got me down off that mountain and took me to their camp where they were bivouacked. They were partisans and the way they had their camp hidden was ingenious. As you were walking down this mountain road, of course one side was down and the other side was up. On the high side was a tree stump and the roots were growing out of the side of the tree and the roots coming out and then going down into the earth. They would step on the roots, climb onto the stump and then step across onto a trail. They would reach back and erase any tracks. The path was on a contour and you had to be right on top of it to see it.

"Well, I stayed with them for three days and one morning we heard this commotion. I was sleeping in this tent with two girl Partisans and we got up on our hands and knees and saw R. W. Phillips and Tom Forbes coming toward me. They were surprised to see me and especially with a girl on either side of me. I warned them that there was no hanky-panky going on because if a girl got pregnant she is going to holler and give the position away. So, if a woman gets pregnant and one man is involved, they shot both of them and if two men were involved and no one admits it, they shoot all three, so there is no hanky-panky.

"We started walking from there and I say we walked 600 miles. It took us three months to get on a plane and go home. At one point we had to cross a big valley and I don't know how big it was but there was 10 miles of us in a line. We had a Battalion of Partisans guarding us. We crossed a railroad track and after we crossed, we started to run and I bet we ran three miles. As we were running we heard this big explosion; they had blown up the tracks. We made it and walked for 27 and a half hours getting across that valley. When finally they stopped, they killed an oxen. One officer from the Partisan Army took out a pistol and shot the oxen three times in the forehead and the oxen didn't even move; just kept chewing on grass. Finally someone came up with a sledge hammer and hit it between the eyes and the oxen fell. They butchered it and made some soup and, boy oh boy that soup looked real good; that big bowl they gave me. It had no salt but I enjoyed it, I enjoyed it immensely!

"Finally we got to a place north of Zagreb and we could hear planes warming up in the morning and a DC-3 came in to pick us up. This field they were going to land in had a big tree in the long direction on the fence line and I said, 'Let's cut it down.' By this time we had a lieutenant with us and he said, 'Good grief no, if they cut that tree down they can see us for miles and miles,' so we taxied down the short part of the field and at the end there was a railroad bed; no tracks, just a bed. The pilot had to brake and spin to the left, and the right wheel went into the mud and sank clear to the top of it and the propeller chewed up a yard of that doggone mud. So we went across the railroad bed and there was a bunch of saplings. We cut the saplings down and put them around the plane to camouflage it. Of course we camouflaged it in the shape of an airplane, you know, the waist, the fuselage and the wings. We scattered the saplings all around it and if anyone would see it would think the trees grew in the shape of an airplane. I told the lieutenant, 'Now nobody knows what we have done.'

"The next day we had 50 teams of oxen out there trying to get us out. Every team had a man, wife and one or two kids. So we hooked up those 50 teams of oxen and tried to pull that plane out but

we couldn't do it. The harness, chains between the oxen would break. Finally, we pulled it out with five teams and that night we flew back to Italy.

"Well, we had body lice on us and old Russell Phillips would scratch and scratch and I would poke him in the ribs and tell him not to scratch but he did it anyway. He was one sore guy! When we got back to Foggia, I took a bath and was given a change of clothes and they sent me home. Russell had to stay in the hospital for I don't know how long. He had rings all over him."

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #41-24405 - "DARK EYES" - 96TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Herman S. Lavine, 0-799202, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Arthur L. Hyatt, 0-680640, CP	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	George J. Seamans, 0-688470, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Louis M. Boehm, 0-684394, B.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Michael A. Croccia, 14061930, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Virgil (NMI) Lazar, 15330452, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Oscar (NMI) Rome, 31002077, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Kenneth C. Cook, 35361908, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert R. Cary, 32360968, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Harold E. Hansen, 37294573, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of Sgt. Glen Hedrick, RW on B-17 #41-24408, after the mission: "I was watching fighters coming in and one peeled off to the right. As he got out of range, I looked back for more fighters and saw a B-17 and heard from the conversation on the interphone that it was #41-24405.

"It was about 400 yards out, at 4:00 o'clock, low. I noticed two chutes already in the air. I kept watching and saw four more bail out at regular intervals. As long as I could see it, which was minutes after I saw the last chute come out, the plane was still under control and the rest of the crew would have had plenty of time to bail out."

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31466 - "LITTLE PETE" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Jennings A. Marshall, 0-799442, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Christopher T. Kelly, 0-749163, CP	(POW)*
2nd Lt.	Charles G. Edmonds, 0-695230, N.	(POW)*
2nd Lt.	Daniel A. Thomas, 0-752960, B.	(POW)*
T/Sgt.	Harold L. Freel, 39352801, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Edward A. DeBrosky, 11089255, L/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Coleman D. Moberly, 15113707, R/W.	(POW)*
S/Sgt.	Ben H. Schmalriede, 38279035, L/W.	(POW)*
Sgt.	Paul F. Johnson, 32491929, T/G.	(EVADED)*
T/Sgt.	Yates K. Rollins, 14100486, R/O.	(POW)

\*Members of the 463rd Bombardment Group

Statement of Sgt. Coleman Moberly, RW, after liberation: "We were attacked by 35-40 German fighters and were forced to bail out due to the accurate marksmanship of the German pilots. There weren't any American fighters to oppose the Luftwaffe, result, 14 months of prison camp.

"Lts. Thomas, Kelly, and Edmonds, Sgt. Schmalriede and myself bailed out. The other five crew members I had never seen before the mission. They were all taken prisoner. I ran into the others at Chile, Austria, and we rode the same train to an interrogation center near Frankfurt, Germany. I last saw them there. We did not know the whereabouts of Sgt. Johnson until we were released from prison and

at LaHavre, France. Captain Davis, Operations Officer of the 775th Squadron, was shot down several weeks after we were and told Lt. Thomas that Sgt. Johnson had evaded. The others, whose names I did not know, were sent to other camps."

#### **VERONA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 164 - MARCH 22, 1944**

Major Bradford A. Evans, Commanding Officer of the 96th Squadron, led 21 aircraft and dropped 63 tons of 1,000-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards at Verona. Flak was intense and accurate causing damage to 13 B-17s. Six to 10 enemy fighters were seen but did not attack the formation. No injuries, no losses. The target was covered by smoke from the bombing of other Groups. Bombs were dropped into the smoke and several explosions were seen. One early return dropped its bombs on Marshalling Yards at Rimini, Italy scoring hits in the southeast yards.

B-17 #42-29579, 429th Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. John Cravath, caught fire in the No. 3 engine and was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea, 47 miles north of Foggia, Italy. The crew was in the water one hour and then picked up by a British torpedo boat. The crew returned to the Squadron the following day.

#### **STEYR, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 165 - MARCH 23, 1944**

Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 23 aircraft to bomb the Walzingerwerk Ball Bearing Factory at Steyr. The formation got to within 41 miles southeast of Klagenfurt, Austria and was recalled by 5th Wing Headquarters due to weather.

#### **STEYR, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 166 - MARCH 24, 1944**

Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 22 aircraft to bomb the same target as of the 23rd. Again the Group was recalled about 47 miles southeast of Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

#### **STEYR, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 167 - MARCH 26, 1944**

For the third time in four days, Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 23 aircraft to bomb the same target at Steyr. This time the Group got over the target but a 10/10 overcast prevent the Group from dropping its bombs. "Window" thin metallic strips resembling tinsel were dropped for the first time to confuse the enemy radar system.

#### **VERONA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 168 - MARCH 28, 1944**

Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 25 aircraft and dropped 75.25 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards at Verona. Six to 12 enemy fighters were seen but were taken care of by the escort. Flak was moderate to intense, fairly accurate. Three B-17s were slightly damaged with no injuries. Strike photos recorded hits on lines, sheds and shops.

The 775th Squadron, 463rd Bomb Group personnel, left for their new Base today. They had been attached to the 2nd Bomb Group since March 14, 1944 and suffered many casualties.

#### **TURIN, ITALY - MISSION NO. 169 - MARCH 29, 1944**

Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 27 aircraft and dropped 78 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards at Turin. Six to 10 enemy fighters attacked the formation after bombs away causing the loss of one B-17, one man killed and one man wounded. Strike photos showed a very good concentration of hits and damaging near misses in the yards and adjacent work and repair shops.

T/Sgt. James H. Taylor, UT, 49th Squadron, was instantly killed by a 20mm shell. 2nd Lt. Robert E. Weiss, CP, 96th Squadron, suffered lacerations of the face and left knee caused by shattered plexiglass.

B-17 #42-97152 was hit by flak, straggled and was attacked by enemy fighters. Seven to eight men were reported to have bailed out.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-97152 - 20TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Edward J. Wronkoski, 0-145229, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Francis A. Sanvito, 0-748256, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Richard T. Zeuglin, 0-694637, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Norman J. Stockstill, 0-689554, B.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Floyd A. High, 15324929, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Maurice R. LaRouche, 36519814, L/T.	(EVADED)
Sgt.	George A. Lawrence, 11116092, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Donald F. Genter, 18169171, L/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	Ernest I. Lipsett, 11091223, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Daniel (NMI) Weiss, 1218325, R/O.	(POW)

1st Lt. Edward J. Wronkoski, P. November 25, 1991: "The mission was uneventful all the way to the target. Weather was clear. I was pilot of a 'G' Model B-17, #297152, which was so new to the Group that it had no Group nor Squadron markings. This was my 39th mission. All was well until the bombardier, Lt. Norman Stockstill, announced bombs away. My first thought was that one of the bombs had exploded under the wing, but what actually happened, to the best of my memory, we took flak hits on engines one, three, and four, plus the bomb bay. I was able to feather No. 1 engine, No. 2 was in good working order, but No. 3 and No. 4 could not be feathered and running away with occasional fire at both propellers.

"I really appreciated Col. Ryan slowing the formation down allowing me to hang on to the tail until we reached an area around Cairo, Italy where we were attacked by four Fiat G-55 fighters belonging to the Italian Republican Force (Fascist). Not one crew member, nor fighter pilot, properly identified these aircraft. As I recall, we were attacked from 12 o'clock by two of them and I did not feel that they did any damage, but my other crew members claim we were hit several times by them. One of those pilots was W.O. Iellice, who was shot down that day by Herschel Green, Major, from the 317th Fighter Squadron. I met with W.O. Iellice in 1969 and he confirmed this. The other G-55 was piloted by a Captain Bonet who lives near the Brenner Pass and I had hoped to see him but it did not work out. Incidentally, we never did see any American fighters. After about four passes at us, number four propeller left the airplane and the fires in numbers three and four increased.

"My original intention was to make it to the water, hopefully ditch and be picked up. Due to the nature of the engine fires and weather conditions, I decided to abandon the aircraft. We all got out safely but my co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Francis Sanvito, who struck an open bomb bay door, and was severely injured.

"We were all captured within ten hours except S/Sgt. Maurice LaRouche who was picked up by Partisans and worked with them for several months before he evaded to Morocco and then made his way back to the Bomb Group in Italy.

"The rest of us were interned in Cairo, Italy for one or two nights. Sanvito and S/Sgt. Floyd High stayed in the hospital but the rest of us were sent to Turin, Verona, Dulag Luft near Munich, then sent to various prison camps. I spent one month in solitary confinement in Verona, on bread and water in a 10 x 10 cell with no lights, beds or other facility. I estimate that I lost 60 pounds in those 30 days. I finally ended up in Stalag Luft I and was liberated in May 1945 by the Russians."



T/Sgt. Robert H. Odegaard, Flight Engineer, 20th Squadron. November 10, 1993: "I was on the original crew of 2nd Lt. Francis A. Sanvito. We flew B-17 #42-97152 from the States. Other members of the crew were 2nd Lt. Walter R. Crowl, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Richard T. Zeugin, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Norman Stockstill, bombardier; myself, Flight engineer; S/Sgt. Paul Henderson, Radio; S/Sgt. Andrew M. McCrossan, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. Robert F. Johnson, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. Herbert H. Holdeman, Ball Turret; and S/Sgt. William C. Wilson, Tail Gunner.

"S/Sgt. McCrossan and S/Sgt. Henderson had been killed on the raid to Villaorba, Italy. Then Lts. Sanvito, Zeugin, and Stockstill went down on the mission on the 29th, and Lt. Crowl was killed the next day, the 30th, on the raid to Sofia, Bulgaria.

"The four remaining enlisted men missed this mission of the 29th as we had been on guard duty the night before so we were replaced. We eventually completed our missions.

"Francis Sanvito kept in touch with me and in a letter to me, told of his experience on this mission. He died sometime in 1991."

I had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Mary Sanvito at the 2nd bombardment Reunion in Kansas City, MO, in 1995. She graciously granted me permission to use whatever parts of her husband's letter that I choose, which follows:

"If you remember that far back, on 29 March 1944, the mission to the Turin railroad yards ended in near disaster for the crew. We were shot down shortly after leaving the target but, miraculously, we all survived. Two of us, Floyd High and myself, wound up in a hospital called Cairo Montonotte, about 50 miles south-southeast of Turin. One of the waist gunners, S/Sgt. Maurice LaRouche, eluded the Germans, worked with the underground for a while, and then eventually made it back. The others, captured by the Germans and interned.

"You also might remember that we usually hit the target at noon, apparently to shake up the Germans while they were having lunch! I think they finally changed lunch to 11:00 a.m. to foil us. Well, about the time all the shooting was going on, a young boy of nine, from Cairo, was going home from school for lunch. Ideal timing. He saw the tail end of the encounter and watched as the parachutes came to earth. In general we all landed about three/four miles from Cairo in the wooded area around the town. The boy also saw our plane coming down to earth, not much further away.

"The next day he wrote in his diary to the effect: 'Who are these men?' 'Where do they come from?' 'What's going to happen to them?' He marveled at how well fed we were.

"During the 30 days that Floyd and I were in the hospital, a couple of blocks from where he lived, he'd go down and wonder about us.

"Well, this boy made it to the Italian Naval Academy, graduated, was sent to Pensacola to earn his wings, served in the Italian Naval Air Force, retired, and eventually became a 747 pilot flying for Alitalia International Airlines. As such, he has come often to the US. With the help of his contacts he made at Pensacola, he has been able to put the pieces together. My new friend's name is Giancarlo Garelo, now a resident of Rome.

"He has contacted eight of the ten men involved, including Dick and Norm. I was number eight. After making initial contact back in July, he sent me a picture of our plane after it hit the ground. Despite a free fall of 20,000 feet, it landed almost intact.

"I was wounded and unconscious when I landed. An Italian 'woodfolk' family found me and brought me to a farmhouse where they gave me their version of first aid, 'steaming hot packs,' to clean the wound. Fortunately I was only half conscious so I felt only part of the pain, but I can remember what went on. A teenage boy was the one who carried me to the farm. This boy-turned-pilot located the other boy, was brought to the spot where they found me, and sent me pictures. He located the

barber who came to the hospital once a week to give Floyd and me a shave, even though we had no money. He was able to supply enough detail to authenticate these people."

#### **SOFIA, BULGARIA - MISSION NO. 170 - MARCH 30, 1944**

Lt. Col. John D. Ryan led 31 aircraft and dropped 98 tons of 500-lb. GP and incendiary bombs on the industrial section of Sofia. Flak was moderate, fairly accurate, wounding two men and causing damage to five planes. Three to six enemy fighters attacked the formation. The attacks were from all angles, very aggressive, resulting in the death of one man, wounding of two others and damaging two planes. One enemy aircraft was claimed.

S/Sgt. Raymond Bringolf, UT, 96th Squadron, instantly killed by shrapnel. Wounded: T/Sgt. Robert D. Centers, RO, 96th Squadron, lacerations on right wrist by 20mm shrapnel; S/Sgt. Lavern H. Bensyl, Waist Gunner, 96th Squadron, lacerations of right cervical area from 20mm shrapnel; 2nd Lt. Henry (NMI) Finley, N, 429th Squadron, fracture of right index finger caused by flak; and T/Sgt. Donald C. Gardner, TG, 429th Squadron, flak wound, right arm.

Strike photos showed bombs in the assigned area causing fires and explosions.

Sgt. Howard S. Williams, TG, 49th Squadron, credited with one Me-109.

Two planes from the 20th Squadron were involved in a mid-air collision. Plane #42-31851 and #42-31683 collided about 35 miles west of Sofia. A sharp right turn was made at the I.P. and plane #851 did not turn wide enough, was apparently caught in the prop wash of another plane, and crashed down on top of #683. Both planes started to disintegrate and went down. One parachute was seen.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31851 - 20TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Fred O. Wickham, 0-726938, P.	(DED)*
2nd Lt.	Walter R. Crowl, 0-757609, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	Erwin (NMI) Rubenstein, 0-749743, N.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	Orville W. Reilly, Jr., 0-744291, B.	(DED)
T/Sgt.	Richard L. Luksch, 32374868, U/T.	(DED)
Sgt.	Andrew W. Warga, Jr., 12165638, L/T.	(DED)
Sgt.	William B. Marion, 14048476, R/W.	(DED)
Sgt.	Peter F. O'Grady, 31189366, L/W.	(DED)
Sgt.	Tony H. Morrish, 9165048, T/G.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Homer D. McKee, 19148167, R/O.	(DED)

\*Member of the 463rd Bombardment Group

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31683 - 20TH SQUADRON**

2nd Lt.	Leroy P. Rigney, 0-894735, P.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	Harold A. Meyer, Jr., 0-806108, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	William E. Mitchell, 0-811745, N.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	William J. Vavrik, 0-690783, B.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Orvel W. Buechner, 38270647, U/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Richard A. Gilbert, 33368553, L/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	William F. Corbin, 35658942, R/W.	(DED)
Sgt.	Alvin G. Barrow, 18114903, L/W.	(DED)
Sgt.	Marion J. Maddox, 34185464, T/G.	(DED)
Sgt.	Peter A. Victor, 32527962, R/O.	(DED)

Information was received from the Bulgarian Ministry of War on 9 February 1945 that two bombers crashed at Kasbarevo on 30 March 1944. The people of that city buried the men in their local cemetery. Identification was not recorded. When the grave was opened later, remains of 20 bodies were found. Only one body was found with any identification and these were the remains of Sgt. Tony H. Morrish. He was the tail gunner on B-17 #42-31851, and evidently the one reported to have come from one of the aircraft.