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Operations: July, 1944

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YOR, HUNGARY - MISSION NO. 222 - JULY 2, 1944

The primary target was the Almas Fazito Oil Storage and Refinery only to find it cloud covered. The formation changed course and bombed Marshalling Yards and Installations at Gyor. The target was well covered with explosions seen. An early return bombed the town of Vulcover, Hungary with poor results.

ARAD, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 223 - JULY 3, 1944

Twenty-five aircraft dropped 75 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Car Repair and Car Shop at Arad. Photos showed the area to be well covered. Flak was heavy, slight intensity and with fair accuracy.

A/C #42-37162, 49th Squadron, developed engine trouble and was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea. All crew members were picked up by a U.S. Navy Patrol Boat. The crew are:

1st Lt. James H. Twibell, 0-677331, P.
2nd Lt. A. B. Drais, 0-808805, CP.
2nd Lt. Robert E. Unger, 0-692335, N.
2nd Lt. Albert E. Gregor, 0-688347, B.
T/Sgt. Leo C. Smith, 39288597, U/T.
S/Sgt. Bernard T. Foy, 38128812, L/T.
S/Sgt. Stanley A. Groom, 12173668, R/W. Slightly injured.
S/Sgt. William T. Edwards, 15336153, L/W. Slightly injured.
S/Sgt. William L. Cooper, 15335485, T/G. Slightly injured.
T/Sgt. Walter R. Lisowski, 15374407, R/O. Slightly injured.

S/Sgt. William L. Cooper, TG. January 4, 1993: "On July 3, 1944, we were in a formation over the Adriatic and headed for a Balkan country. The Group spread out and we test fired our guns. Shortly after, the Group tightened up. As we did, we noticed smoke coming from No. 2 engine. Whether we were hit by a stray bullet, or some other reason, we were in trouble.

"We turned around and headed back to our Base. The engine was feathered but the smoke was becoming worse. Jim made the decision to ditch. The six of us enlisted men grouped in the radio room. We hit the water hard but we were lucky, no break ups, and no explosion. Luck and Twibell's ability as a good steady pilot. After a short struggle with the left dinghy, we were finally afloat. The right side had no trouble. The plane nosed over and went down. We were all OK except for a few cuts and

bruises. Again we were lucky. The water was smooth as a table top and we started to sing and row for shore. We were in sight of land.

"About this time we noticed a column of smoke in the distance. It was a U.S. Navy Patrol Boat headed for Yugoslavia. They picked us up and we spent the night in a small coastal town. The next day they took us back to Italy. Our crew, even though we were separated during our final mission, all made it to the end."

BRASOV, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 224 - JULY 4, 1944

Twenty-four aircraft dropped 72 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Photogen Oil Refinery in Brasov. Results were not obtainable due to smoke over the target from other Groups' bombs. The bombs went into the smoke area. No injuries, no losses. Around 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., about every gun in camp opened up in a traditional celebration of the 4th. It was a miracle that no one was injured by falling lead.

MONTPELLIER, FRANCE - MISSION NO. 225 - JULY 5, 1944

Twenty-seven aircraft dropped 81 tons of 1,000 GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards in this city. The target was well covered. Flak was light to moderate, accurate and heavy. No E/A were encountered and there were no injuries nor losses.

VERONA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 226 - JULY 6, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 84 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards at Verona. The target was well covered with only a few bombs short. Flak was heavy, medium to intense, and inaccurate. Three to four E/A attacked the formation before being engaged by the escort. B-17 #42-31848 was the rear A/C of this formation and was seen to go down and explode. Three or four chutes were reported seen.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31848 - 429TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt.	William A. Runyon, 0-807520, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Raymond G. Haug, 0-819518, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	William L. McIlhargie, 0-708512, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Curtis A. Pfaff, 0-749741, B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	George B. Miller, 34689062, U/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Louis A. Rodriguez, 32221177, L/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Clarence R. Goulet, 31173113, R/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Charles J. Brower-Anchor, 12027423, L/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Clarence F. Smith, 33585103, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Paul (NMI) Alexo, Jr., 33187230, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 1st Lt. William L. McIlhargie, after liberation: "I was blown out of the plane, unconscious. I came to the following Saturday afternoon and have no knowledge of the others. I saw Sgt. Alexo, the radio man, last. He had a flak wound in his leg and it didn't look good. There wasn't time to give him first aid. I had just arrived there for that reason, then the ship blew up and that is all I remember. The last conversation I had with Lt. Runyon was to ask permission to go back and give first aid to the radio operator."

Statement of S/Sgt. Paul Alexo, Jr., RO, after liberation: "I was blown out of the plane with two others when the plane blew up. S/Sgt. Smith had received a 20mm wound in his chest and was blown

out. He died on the ground. I saw him in the hospital, dead. Lt. Runyon did not get out. Sgt. Goulet was killed by a 20mm shell and was last seen lying on the floor of the plane. Sgt. Brower-Anchor was killed by a 20mm shell in his back and was lying on the floor, dead. S/Sgt. Miller was last seen at his guns when the ship exploded."

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 227 - JULY 7, 1944

Major Charles H. Hillhouse led 33 aircraft and 24 got over the target. Twenty-three aircraft dropped 68 tons of 500-lb. BP bombs into the smoke filled target. The smoke prevented observation of results. Flak was intense to moderate, accurate and heavy resulting in slight damage to eight B-17s and loss of #42-38123, 20th Squadron.

Me-109s and FW-190s attacked the formation, firing rockets and 20mm cannon. B-17 #42-97351, 20th Squadron, was shot down at 1000 hours. B-17 #42-97183, 96th Squadron, was last seen at 1028 hours. B-17 #42-31470, 429th Squadron, was last seen at 1005 hours.

Two Me-109s were destroyed with claims going to S/Sgt. Thomas J. Russell, TG, 20th Squadron and S/Sgt. Chrisgos C. Bezdaris, TG, 429th Squadron. S/Sgt. George H. Kilson, UT, 49th Squadron, was credited with the probable destruction of a FW-190.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38213 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	William (NMI) Nabinger, 0-691537, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Owen E. Rice, Jr., 0-816585, CP.	(KIA)
F/O	Ralph T. Mooney, T-816585, N.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Howard (NMI) Freidman, 0-695486, B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	James O. Jarrell, 14654256, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Frank R. Bossi, 13002064, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Herb E. Helstrom, 19097042, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Charles L. Woods, 18194968, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Dwight C. Wheeler, 37515432, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Wesley (NMI) Frinsco, 13056611, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of S/Sgt. Anderson Frank, Jr., TG on B-17 #692, 96th Squadron, at interrogation: "I first noticed B-17 #213 at 1054 hours. It suffered a direct hit in the cockpit section, blowing off the nose. The damaged aircraft went into a stall and straight down. I believe flak at the target was the cause."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-97351 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Harold T. Tomlinson, 0-809894, P.	(POW)
1st Lt.	Reese N. Burks, 0-819106, CP.	(POW)*
1st Lt.	Frank P. Fleming, 0-680396, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Michael R. Miller, 0-690593, B.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Martino (NMI) Cardone, 12038797, U/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Philip J. McQuaid, 31292340, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Henry W. Garnett, 18089166, R/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Robert S. Wolfe, 35633814, L/W.	(KIA)
Cpl.	Joseph B. Cash, Jr., 36831437, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Henry F. O'Neill, 32533888, R/O.	(KIA)

*Died in prison camp

Statement of Captain Harold T. Tomlinson, P, after liberation: "Our aircraft hit the ground 1-1/2 miles north of the Danube River near Györ, Hungary. Five of the crew bailed out over Györ. Five of the crew were killed by enemy gunfire. Lt. Burks died in POW camp. I was told he died of spinal meningitis. Lt. Miller was never seen after bailing out. I know he bailed out because I saw him do so. My last contact with Lt. Burks, prior to bailing out, was when he helped me put on my parachute and said, 'Get ready to jump.' I last saw him in a POW detention house on July 8, 1944. The first I knew of his death was after returning home and contacting his family.

"I had no conversation with Lt. Miller prior to bailing out. I never heard of him again. Whether his chute did not open, strafed by enemy fighters, or killed by civilians, I do not know. He was not in our prisoner group the first night of our capture. We did discuss the possibility of his landing in the Danube, which was very wide at this point.

"Lt. Fleming was not injured in the air. His chute had burned on one corner and he had cracked ribs upon landing. He could not walk and was captured immediately. We all stayed together (Burks, Cardone, Fleming, myself) the first night of capture and moved to a hospital in Budapest the next day. He was in the Budapest hospital until generally recovered and then moved to Stalag Luft III.

"S/Sgt. O'Neill did not respond to the interphone after the first attack. The engineer was knocked out of position in the second attack and his guns destroyed. He saw the body of O'Neill on the floor of the plane prior to bailing out. The enemy recovered the body from the plane. We were taken to the scene of the crash. T/Sgt. Cardone could speak Italian and used as an interpreter. It is believed that O'Neill was killed in the second attack.

"It is believed that S/Sgt. McQuaid, BT, was killed when enemy shells and rockets hit the rear of the plane, also killing the tail gunner. The waist gunners reported on the interphone as to extensive tail damage so do know the interphone was working. Then came the second and third attack and he never reported after the first attack. His body was recovered from the plane and identified by Cardone.

"S/Sgt. Garnett, RW, was killed by enemy gunfire and rockets. Cardone looked back, prior to salvoing bombs, and saw the waist gunners and radio operator lying on the floor of the plane. Ship was on fire from the rockets and number of bullets that hit our plane. His body was recovered and identified by Cardone.

"Sgt. Wolfe was last seen lying on the floor by Sgt. Cardone. On the first night of our capture, we discussed events and determined he had been killed by enemy gunfire.

"Just prior to the first attack, Cpl. Cash was warned to keep a sharp lookout for enemy fighters. After the first attack there was no response on the interphone from the tail position. Waist gunners reported him dead and guns inoperative. Later information, from other planes in the Group, indicated that the entire burst of gunfire in the first attack seemed to be centered in the tail area. The body of Cpl. Cash was recovered and identified by Sgt. Cardone. It was his first mission."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-97183 - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Ira B. Corpening, 0-755284, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	John F. Kellogg, 0-751345, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	William D. Devoe, 0-749819, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Robert F. Gallup, 0-739423, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Norton D. Skinner, 16169858, U/T.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Shields G. Stultz, 13120896, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Paul E. Brau, 37033438, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	William J. Leszczynski, 11113656, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Samuel L. Strode, 17159203, T/G.	(EVADED)
T/Sgt.	Virgil R. Stuart, 37501688, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of T/Sgt. Norton D. Skinner, UT, after evading: "All the crew bailed out over N.W. Sloviaka, about the same place. The only other crew member I saw later was Sam Strode. I understand the plane struck the ground near Japlonika.

"Sam Strode and I were in the same camp together in Bratislavia. He landed pretty hard but otherwise seemed to be OK. Claude Davis, Frank Soltis, George Winberg, Neal Cobb and others, whose names I do not remember, left the country with me. There were a few fellows leaving camp with us but never heard from again. They must have been caught by Germans."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31470 - 429TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Driscoll B. Horton, 0-690082, P.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	Peter B. Beers, 0-759402, CP.	(EVADED)
2nd Lt.	Robert E. McAdam, 0-720687, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	John N. Schmittener, 0-695138, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	William P. Hurley, 39279332, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Floyd A. Ticknor, 17034056, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Raymond T. Murphy, 33675286, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	James D. Osborne, 38449421, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Vincent J. Sodaro, 32804649, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Robert C. Stewart, 13087773, T/G.	(POW)*

*Died in prison camp

Statement of Robert R. Hindert, RW, on B-17 42-107066, at interrogation: "At 1015 hours, plane #470 feathered No. 2 engine and dropped down approximately 300 feet and 500 feet to the right. Approximately ten minutes later, I noticed that No. 4 engine was smoking. This engine was feathered and #470 made a 180-degree turn to the left and headed home. I did not see any fighters attack this plane."

Statement of 1st Lt. John W. Schmittener, B, after liberation: "I was the eighth man out of the ship. The pilot and co-pilot bailed out later. As far as I know, all men were all right except Sgt. Stewart who died in transient prison camp, at Wetzler, Germany, from an infection. He was not wounded on the plane. The last time I saw him he was expecting to stay at Dulag Luft, Wetzler, as a mess helper. He had dysentery but seemed cured.

"We had been flying on engines 3 and 4 for about half an hour, lightening the ship, but still losing altitude. We headed for Yugoslavia. I was helping at pilotage, to avoid flak batteries. We caught some flak in the Graz area and No. 4 engine ran away. The pilot gave orders to bail out and the gunners, navigator, and myself obeyed. We landed near St. Michael, Austria, and all were captured. The searchers seemed to be old men and school children. Sgt. Murphy had a broken leg, which was not set properly for weeks. I had a back injury that paralyzed me temporarily. Sgt. Stewart had dysentery and a town doctor gave him some medicine that did not help.

"A few days later the eight of us were taken to a Luftwaffe camp in Graz. A few days later we were taken to Cherrusal for interrogation. Here we were separated and T/Sgt. Hurley and myself were kept after the rest were taken to Dulag Luft. We were kept in solitary confinement for more than a week and then sent to Wetzler. Here I saw all the men except the pilot and co-pilot, whom I later heard had evaded. They were all OK except Sgt. Hurley who had been taken to a hospital. At this time I was able to walk. When I left camp, the gunners, including Sgt. Stewart, were all right. This was the last I heard of them and did not learn of Sgt. Stewart's death until my return home in July, 1945.

Escape statement of 1st Lt. Peter B. Beers, CP, August 27, 1944: "Our plane was hit by three Me-109s about 30 minutes before target. No. 1 and No. 2 engines were shot out and the pilot headed for home. In the vicinity of Budapest, No. 3 engine was badly hit by flak and the aircraft was losing altitude. The navigator told the pilot to head SW and he and the bombardier bailed out just north of Lake Balaton. The pilot flew in the direction of Marcali and Nagy Kanizas in Hungary, then into Yugoslavia. He had to turn north to avoid flak at Maribor. Finally it became necessary to bail out and I did so just south of Graz, Austria.

"When I landed I was seen by some Austrian farmers who immediately went for the Gestapo. I then started walking south and by using escape kit aids, continued to walk for five days and four nights with practically no rest or sleep. When I came over the Yugoslavia border, I was picked up by civilians who took me to the Partisans in the vicinity of Maribor. I arrived at this mission about two weeks after I was shot down. I was then guided through Oelje and westward, across the Savo River, to Litizia, thence to an Allied mission at Nova Mesto. Later, I was taken to an airstrip at Staro Tuck where I was evacuated."

2nd Lt. Charles N. Beecham, and his crew, were assigned to the 20th Squadron. April 1, 1991: "We left Tampa on the 10th of March 1944 and went to Savannah, GA to pick up a brand new B-17G, #2107118. When I took delivery on the 12th, after a short acceptance flight, it had only nine hours on it. We left Homestead Field, FL, where we received our sealed orders, not to be opened until two days out. Everyone knew we were going to North Africa three minutes after wheels up.

"In Trinidad I received such a sunburn, while checking out the plane, that I was in the hospital three days while the crew had a good time swimming and living the good life. We flew the southern route, ending up in Marrakech with no further problems. After a few days checking out the aircraft, we then departed on the final destination, Tunis. We took off on this leg at night and then first climbed up through the Atlas Pass. It was a clear night but no moon and there were absolutely no lights on the ground. Although I knew I was high enough to go through the Pass, it was so turbulent that I kept thinking that there must be a mountain ahead that I had not accounted for. I was really scared and had to call on all my cadet instrument experience to keep from getting vertigo.

"After three days in Tunis we received orders to proceed to Foggia, Italy. At Foggia, we were directed to land at Foggia Main Field. It was hard to figure out which field was Foggia Main as there were several air fields in the area. Also, all the B-17s and B-24s were returning from a mission about that time and the whole air was a mass of confusion. We were on the ground about an hour and were assigned to the 2nd Bomb Group and given instructions to proceed to the airfield with double runways at Amendola, about 10 miles east. This field was shared by the 2nd and 97th Bomb Groups and an RAF Night Bomber Squadron. The runways were steel mats connected like a crossword puzzle. There were no buildings on the field with the exception of a control tower on each side and small huts at each parking space; just two runways, taxi strips and parking revetments for each B-17. A 'follow me' jeep directed me to a revetment in the 20th Squadron area. We unloaded our belongings from old #118 and I met the 20th Squadron Maintenance Officer who proceeded to 'buy' the aircraft from me. You see, I owned all its equipment, records and documents for the trip from the factory to the 2nd.

"We checked in at 20th Squadron Headquarters and met the Squadron Commander, Lt. Col. James Ellis, the older brother of my 43-G classmate, Leland C. Ellis. We then went with him to the Group Commander's tent, Colonel Herbert E. Rice, a grizzled old soldier who liked to play the saxophone. Then Vaughn, Babin, Seyfried and I went to Squadron supply and were issued a standard pyramidal tent designed for eight men in double decker bunks, so each man had one side. We unpacked after the tent was erected and got ready for the evening meal at the Officer's Club.

"The morning of 5 April 1944 came early! Too early for us as we didn't sleep well on the first night. I heard this Jeep driving through the area, stopping and yelling at each tent. When it got close to us I thought, 'Surely they wouldn't use us this soon!' When the Jeep got to our tent, the driver yelled, 'Lt. Beecham, briefing at 0500!' It was 0330 at the time. The driver also said that Lt. Vaughn was not scheduled to fly. I was to fly co-pilot for an experienced pilot who would command my aircraft and crew. After shaving and dressing we made our way to the club for breakfast. We then got into trucks for the trip to the 2nd Bomb Group Operations area. We arrived there a little before 0500. Officers were given the mission briefing and airmen were given a specialized briefing in another area. Most everyone felt the need to take another run to the latrine after hearing the news that the target was the Oil Refineries at Ploesti, Romania!

"Captain Ernie Blanton had already completed 50 missions with the 2nd Bomb Group, gone home on leave and now was back to fly some more. He was to be my Aircraft Commander for this mission. We would be flying old #118 and would be leading the 2nd element (right side of the Group lead element) of seven aircraft. The 2nd Bomb Group would be second over the target and we would be at 26,000 feet at the target. Our briefing consisted of location and number of anti-aircraft batteries en route to and at the target and number of enemy fighters en route and at the target. We were given escape kits consisting of maps, printed on silk, a dictionary with words for the area and escape routes if shot down. The total flight time for the mission was ten hours which included two hours for formation and climb over Italy before heading to the target.

"We got on our crew truck, after everyone had his turn at the latrine, and the trip to Amendola was a lot of excitement. When we got to old #118's parking revetment we found she had been painted with the Group and Squadron insignia: A 'Y' (5th Bomb Wing) inside a Circle (2nd BG), painted on the vertical stabilizer and on the upper surfaces of the horizontal stabilizers. Two 24"-wide black stripes were painted on the upper and lower surface of the wings just outboard of the No. 1 and No. 4 engines. The 20th Squadron symbol was on the upper top of the vertical stabilizer and painted yellow. We put our gear on board and gave the aircraft a 'walk around' inspection. Each crew member had his own area of responsibility on the inspection. Old #118 was loaded with six, 500-lb. bombs, three on each side of the bomb bay catwalk.

"Old #118's heating system went out, as all B-17 heating systems seemed to do, about an hour after we took delivery of her. This meant we all had to dress for 'COLD WEATHER.' On that morning, I put on 'Long Johns,' wool pants and wool flying suit. I wore my leather A-2 jacket, but put my fur lined jacket aboard. I wore my fur lined boots over my high top shoes and had heavy gloves on. I wore a leather fur lined cap with a long bill until we reached 10,000 feet and at that time we switched to a leather helmet with ear phones. We then put on our oxygen masks. The gunners all wore fur lined suits with the exception of Kephart, our ball turret gunner, who wore an electric suite due to the cramped quarters in the ball turret. Even with my heavy clothing, my toes, knees, and fingers froze on every mission. We all had throat mikes for ease of communication during the flight. My mike button was on the pilot's wheel. The B-17 did not have a sanitation system with the exception of 'relief tubes,' which were plastic funnels connected to tubes to the outside slip stream. One was located in the forward nose, two in the bomb bay and one in the rear of the aircraft. The rule was that you would do 'number two' before take-off or hold it until you got back.

"Captain William Byrd, Operations Officer from the 429th Squadron, was flying lead that day so he was the first to take off. He was followed by the other ships in his lead element. We, the 20th Squadron, were in the second element. The B-17s flying off Amendola's twin runways presented a particular hazard for each other as both Groups were flying in very much the same airspace. On at least three occasions, before we arrived, there were mid-air collisions with the resultant loss of aircraft and crews. Shortly after we departed on course, and were over the Adriatic Sea, the order was given to

spread out so all gunners could test their guns. When all this was done, we started our gradual climb to Ploesti. There were two Groups of fighters for protection to the target and two Groups covered our withdrawal.

"We crossed the coast at Dubrovnik and followed a course that took us just north of Krusevak prior to reaching Romania. There were several anti-aircraft guns near the coast so I experienced my first taste of war. The experience is much like watching a fireworks display, only you are right in the middle of the action. I had to watch myself to keep from getting hypnotized watching the bursts. My job as co-pilot was to keep an eye on the engine instruments. Most of the flak was of the barrage type, i.e., they would set their fuses at a certain altitude and hope that we would run into it. A direct hit by an 88mm shell would destroy a B-17. Even without a direct hit a lot of damage was done running through the air full of flying junk. As I would find out later, there were very few missions in which my aircraft didn't receive some damage from flak. We were bothered by intermittent flak all the way to the target. A few enemy fighters were sighted and they would cruise up and down the formation, just out of range, looking for a loose formation or stragglers. Then they would jump on that loose formation or stragglers. Ernie kept calling for our formation to come in close, but the 2nd did get a few passes, just to keep us honest. It was then I found out what a noisy bunch of guys I had on my crew plus an awful lot of shooting.

"It didn't take any smarts to tell where Ploesti was. The Axis was prepared to defend it to the death. Our I.P. was Trigouiste, about five miles west of Ploesti. The air was full of flak, you could almost walk on it. As we were about 26,000 feet, we were in better shape than the Groups following us. As I recall, we did not lose any aircraft on this trip but many sustained flak damage. I could see planes going down from other Groups. All bombardiers were instructed to 'Drop' on the lead bombardier's drop, that way, all the bombs would land on the same spot.

"We turned left off the target and there was some general disorder as our formation was ragged. Some of our aircraft had engines shot out and were having trouble keeping up with the formation. The enemy fighters jumped us before we could get out of the target area. During this action, my gunners were shooting at everything and there was a lot of excited conversation. There was one enemy fighter shot down and my crew was credited with one half, shared with another crew that claimed the same plane. Captain Byrd finally got all the Group together in a tight formation and we were relatively free of fighter attacks on the way home. The enemy spent all their time attacking wounded B-24s and B-17s from other Groups. It was reported that there were some 25 B-17s lost by the Wing this day.

"Getting all the B-17s back on the ground in an orderly fashion is, if anything, a little more complicated than getting them off, especially if there are casualties or severe damage to the aircraft. Today was no exception as there were both severely wounded and damaged planes in the Group. Each Squadron had a Flight Surgeon, Medics, and a 'Meat Wagon' standing by for the return of the Group. Captain Lyman Ihle was the Flight Surgeon for the 20th Squadron and we all got to know him real well in the next few months. If there were casualties on board, you would signal the ground with a flare gun. The Medics would follow the B-17 to the end of the runway or revetment. After we got on the ground, we surveyed the damage to old #118, 17 flak holes in the wings and fuselage but the self sealing fuel tanks did a good job and very little gas was lost, but I couldn't help but wish that it would take a few days to fix. The Ground Crew Chief, M/Sgt. Steven assured me that the plane would be ready by the next morning. I would also find that these ground crew members could work miracles in patching holes, and as time went on, old #118 would look like a patch work quilt. Captain Blanton complemented me and my crew on how they conducted themselves in combat and said he would recommend that we go without supervision on the next mission. We then got on our crew trucks for our trip to headquarters for debriefing. When we arrived there the first thing they did was give us a shot of whiskey if we wanted it. We were then assigned a debriefing officer who asked for information on flak guns, where and how

accurate. The same questions were asked on the number and type of fighter aircraft en route and location of airfields if we could see them. The navigator had the responsibility of giving all intelligence information on ground activity, unusual movements, guns, and where not shown on flight maps, etc. We then went to the Red Cross coffee wagon for doughnuts and coffee served by the Red Cross girls, then back to our tent to get ready for evening chow.

"We didn't have ice so all drinks, beer and other, were served at room temperature. We found that the veteran crews would take a case of beer on each mission; at 30 below the beer got pretty cold. There was a lot of talk about Ploesti and our hope was that the cameras would show that we wiped the place out, but no, we would go back several more times. We went back to the tent and went to bed but none of us could sleep for awhile. We talked about every phase of the flight and Lou Vaughn (co-pilot), was sorry that he had 50 missions to go compared to Seyfried, Babin and my 48.

"A little about fear. According to the newspapers, it seemed that from 60 to 100 planes were lost by the 15th each time they flew a big mission. So I was programmed to accept a lot of losses each time I flew but never accepted the fact that I might be one of the losses. So, after my first combat mission, it seemed we had fewer losses than I expected. I found that my biggest fear was that I might be branded a coward. The shame would be unbearable and I would rather kill myself than be branded a coward. I developed this fear of having to abort a mission. I would do most anything to keep from it. I certainly was no hero but vowed never to be branded a coward. This fear probably led to the closest call we had during my 50 missions.

"It was on our seventh combat sortie and our third trip to Ploesti. We had completed missions to Treviso, Györ, Belgrade, and Castlefranco with no more nor less severity than our first mission. We were working good as a crew and I had developed a small reputation as a good formation pilot. It was the morning of April 24 and our target was the Marshalling Yards at Ploesti. The 2nd BG was scheduled to fly in the third Group position (97th, 301st, 2nd, and 99th Groups), but as I recall, we were further up in the formation, possibly second. I was flying number two (right wing) in the second flight (20th Squadron.). This position near the front of the entire bomber formation saved our lives.

"We arrived at old #118 and gave it the usual walk-around inspection. I noted that each member of the crew had scrounged some armor plate from old wrecked German tanks to sit on while under flak attack but had no idea how much they weighed. I made a remark to Whitaker that he should get a piece of armor plate for his old pilot's seat. We put our case of beer aboard and got ready for take-off.

"We lined up for take-off, gave it full power for what seemed like a normal take-off. A moment later, the control tower, call sign, 'Darn Thing,' called me and asked me to check my engine instruments. This I did and reported everything was normal. They said we sounded strange as we passed the tower so I had the waist gunners visually check the condition of all four engines to which they reported all OK. We then went about the business of forming up with the Group and heading east for Ploesti. As we were crossing the Adriatic, Seyfried had to have the first of two BM's he would be noted for during our tour of duty. There was a curtain between the nose and the upper deck where the pilots are. We had removed the curtain so that we could visually check on the condition in the nose. On this day I wished that we had not removed the curtain, as I had to watch him go through the entire procedure of taking an emergency crap. What he did was take his flak helmet and put two or three unfolded maps in it. He then removed his heavy flight clothes, and then in the bumpy air, finally got the job done. Then he folded the whole mess up, opened the navigator's hatch and threw it out. The next thing I heard was, 'Holy S---t, what the hell was that?' Kephart, my ball turret gunner, got the whole package and a lot of it froze on contact! He had to run the turret through a few times to scrape it off! It wasn't funny, especially for Kephart.

"There was one thing about old #118 that was a paradox. I had to pull more power than the other B-17s in order to maintain the same indicated airspeed. What was strange was that I got better

fuel economy than the others where I should be using a proportionate amount of more fuel. On this day, at about 15,000 feet, we noted that we couldn't get any more than about 15 inches of manifold pressure on the right, inboard engine (No. 3), even with the supercharger on. It was then we realized that the noise heard by the control tower was a blown manifold. It had gotten worse as we climbed to altitude and now was of no more value than a feathered engine. We were most of the way through Yugoslavia and had already been attacked by enemy fighters; I certainly didn't want to turn around and abort the mission as we would be sitting ducks for the Luftwaffe. I pulled out of formation, told Babin to salvo our bombs to lighten our load. I then returned to the formation and pulling more power, stayed with them to the target. We then made the bomb run even though we didn't have anything to drop, and I wished Seyfried had waited a little longer on his BM. Flak was as heavy as I have ever seen it and fighters were waiting for us. The turn off the target was sharp and the B-17s of the 2nd BG started to pull away. I dropped down under our formation and this provided some amount of protection by the other planes of the Group but they all were leaving us gradually behind. We got a pass from a Me-109 and he put a 20mm shell in our outboard (No. 4) engine. We had a brief fire until Lou feathered it. I increased the supercharger controls on No. 1 and No. 2 engines until they were in the RED LINE area. RED LINE means that the engine is not expected to last more than five minutes at that setting. I was having a lot of control problems with power only on one side and was faced with more passes from German fighters. Lou reached over and pulled the power back to within limits and I realized what a stupid mistake I had made.

"I kept falling back and pulled up under each succeeding Bomb Group and my gunners did a good job of fighting back. I gave the order to throw out the armor plate. The guys had a rough time as they had to disconnect their oxygen masks to carry the plates to the bomb bay for dropping. We then threw out all other stuff that wasn't connected to the plane. We were not too far from the Adriatic when we ran out of top cover by the B-24 Groups. We were alone about half way across Yugoslavia. We were a little more than an hour behind our Group and they had already reported us as lost. We were lucky we made it home and that no one was killed. There was one casualty in that Kephart's suit shorted out and he had some burns and damn near froze to death in the flimsy flight suit. Matt Roberts and Charlie Nelson, waist gunners, claimed one Me-109 shot down and got verification from other B-17 crews that they had. When we got on the ground we counted 167 flak and 50 cal. holes in the aircraft.

"Our briefing lasted about an hour and a half, and Col. Ellis wanted to know why I hadn't returned when the tower asked me to check my engines. You can imagine how I would have felt if I had returned and found nothing wrong with the aircraft. I didn't tell anyone I had dropped my bombs before we got to the target and to this day, I believe they dropped in a canyon in the Transylvania Alps. No damage except to mountain goats.

"The next few days were spent waiting for old #118 to get repaired. I decided we needed a good name for the old bird so asked for suggestions. I got mostly raunchy names with nude girls in strange positions near the gun ports or antennas. I told the boys I didn't do nudes as I never learned how. We finally decided on a cute little guy in a comic strip, which was appearing in the *Army Times* newspapers. 'PRIVATE SNAFU' (Situation Normal, All Fouled Up), a little guy who was always in trouble. Pvt. SNAFU had dreamed he had turned into superman and for several episodes, turned into a guy who could do anything, for good of course. His name was 'SNAFUPERMAN!' SNAFUPERMAN was shown with his flowing cape about to drop a bomb on the bad guys and SNAFUPERMAN was painted, in rather large letters, on each side of the nose.

"A few other things of note happened about that time. There was a severe thunderstorm one evening that blew our tent and most of our belongings away. We decided not to keep the tent and each of us purchased a share of someone else's deluxe stone house. They guy I bought from was leaving for the States. I also bought this guy's Italian motorcycle. The only other guy in my new home was Lt. Bob

Vander Mullen, a bombardier from Detroit, Michigan. Bob owned a German motorcycle. We became the closest of friends and rode our motorcycles every free minute we had. Bob at the time was the Lead Bombardier of the 20th Squadron.

"The missions started piling up. Many of those missions were short and when we got back to base, Vander Mullen and I would take off on our bikes. Then on the first of June, we were briefed on a mission somewhere in Yugoslavia. After an hour delay on the flight line, we were recalled due to weather. Vander Mullen and I decided we would go to a little town on the spur of Italy, Viesta. When we got back to base around 1600 hours we found we were in deep trouble. We had not signed out nor asked permission to leave! Of course we had never signed out before but that was another story. What happened, while we were gone, the Group had been briefed for 'Operation Frantic,' the first Shuttle Mission to Russia. The mission was to be flown the next day. After what seemed like a solid hour of chewing from Colonel Ellis, we were escorted to Colonel Rice's office where we were treated to some more of the same to a lesser degree. He then proceeded to brief us on the mission. First we had to go to Squadron Supply and get brand new uniforms, cause we didn't want the Russkies to think we were a bunch of slobs. This would be my second mission as Squadron Leader and Vander Mullen would fly with me as the Lead Bombardier. The 20th would fly slot position in the diamond formation. Our target was the Marshalling Yards at Debreczen, Hungary and then proceed to Mirgorod, in the Russian Ukraine.

"There were 170 B-17s and 70 P-51 escorts on the trip to Russia. Although neither flak nor German fighters were encountered over the target, one B-17 exploded in the air (from another Group); our only loss that day. There was some confusion when we got to Mirgorod as the field was hard to recognize. The Air Base was about five miles from the town, where we billeted in a former T.B. Hospital near the downtown area. It did not have indoor facilities. The Russkies had built outdoor latrines that were about eight feet above the ground. You climbed steps to the top and then there were two rows, back to back, of open toilets with no privacy curtains nor fences. Each one of these facilities could handle about 50 guys at one time. There were women on duty all the time to mop and otherwise keep the place clean, even when we were taking care of important things. There was a river nearby and that was where the women did their washing of clothing and personal bathing. In the morning we would sit up on our latrines and watch these big women bathe. We felt like yelling, 'Put it on! Put it on!'

"The people were very nice to us and we had a great time with our Russian dictionaries, trying to converse with them. For a few days we were able to fraternize with the Russkie Air Force people. They had men and women housed in the same barracks and there were several women pilots, not bad looking at all. Then on about the third day, the Russians gave the order, no more fraternization. We had to stay on our side of the river. They were very serious about this and stationed guards on the bridges. I didn't trust these guards as they seemed like they were idiots. They spent a lot of time shooting at things on the bridge.

"We were glad when we finally got the word on our first mission to be flown out of Russia. It was on the 6th of June. It was the day of operation 'OVERLORD' and it was probably planned to create a diversion to keep the enemy aircraft away from the Allies landing on the coast of France. Our target was the Railroad Yards at Galatz, Romania. We returned to Mirgorod without a loss.

"We sat around until the 11th of June and it was pretty dull with no place to go. I think our people finally got disgusted with the Russkies and said, 'To hell with it, we're going home!' We loaded all the equipment and ground support people and headed for home by way of the north airdrome at Focșani, Romania. I had five extra people on board 'SNAFUPERMAN.' We had lost only one aircraft and that was at Mirgorod on take-off. One plane taxied into a covered bomb crater and sank into the ground.

"On the 27th of June, I flew a mission, which I will remember as my most important contribution of the war effort! It was against the Farcencvaros Marshalling Yards on the edge of Budapest, Hungary. On this day I was leading the 20th Squadron element and we were the fourth Squadron in the Group's formation of 28 B-17s. The 2nd Bomb Group was the last Group in the 15th AF effort of that day. In other words, I was leading the last seven aircraft of several hundred launched. The lead Group was to go over the target at 26,000 feet, which put me at about 19,000 feet at the target time.

"We encountered a few flak guns over Yugoslavia but they were not accurate. The closer we got to Budapest we could see a solid deck of clouds with bases at about 17,000 feet and tops about 19,000 to 20,000 feet. Our standard procedure was to go to an alternate if the primary target could not be visibly bombed. My problem, as we got closer to the cloud deck, was that me and my seven B-17s were not going to clear the tops of the deck. When I got into the clouds I was scared to climb at a higher rate for fear that I would bump into the planes above me. Also, clouds are not a good place to be when flying formation and there were some who did not have the experience under instrument conditions. I then made a decision to make a slow descent, thinking that we would break out soon and then catch the other planes on the other side of the cloud deck. We broke out at about 17,000 feet and held a steady course for the I.P. for the bomb run. No sooner than we broke out, Babin gave me a course correction and then activated the PDI and told me to hold the altitude steady and follow the PDI. The Ack Ack batteries started firing at us but they had their fuses set for a higher altitude and were exploding above us. Babin opened the bomb bay doors and started the cameras. Bombs away, seven loads dropped at once and we hit the target area! It was then we noticed that our bombs were the only ones dropped. The rest of the AF went to an alternate target. I couldn't help but fear that the other guys were above us circling the target to drop a load right on top of us. I asked Seyfried for a heading off the target and we headed for home.

"We then noticed there were a whole bunch of Me-109s and FW-190s right under us getting ready to do us no good. All of our guns started shooting at them and the air was full of gun smoke and gunpowder. I pulled up to the base of the clouds and called for the other guys to get in tight. I figured that the Luftwaffe pilots didn't have much more experience in instruments than we did and wouldn't want to climb into the clouds on a gunnery pass. A few of them tried but came out of the clouds in unusual attitudes, certainly not ready to fire at us. Our next fear was that we would run out of cloud cover before those guys ran out of gas. They finally turned back and we breathed a sigh of relief.

"Our course took us just south of Lake Balaton. There were several ACK ACK batteries on the north shore so we were clear of them, and I thought clear of flak until we reached Yugoslavia. Seyfried called and said there may be some flak batteries near the town of Foldvar, which was just ahead, so suggested I start about 45 degrees to the left to miss it. I started the turn immediately and it was the luckiest moment of our lives. Those guys had been tracking us and had fired five rounds of tracking ACK ACK, which if we hadn't turned, would have walked right through our formation at 17,000 feet. Then it became a game of 'Cat and Mouse.' I turned to our original heading and sure enough, they put five rounds where we would have been. I next turned another 45 degrees to the right and this time they fired five rounds way over to the left, on the first heading we had turned to. By this time, we were out of range.

"As we resumed our course for home, we were joined by several stragglers from other Groups who were ahead of us and had gone to an alternate. They were shot up pretty bad and needed a formation to join. Included were two B-24s and a P-38 who had an engine shot out. All in all I had seven extra planes when we got back to Amendola. General Beverly and Colonel Rice sat in on our debriefing. They were elated when our bomb strike film was processed and showed that we got our bombs on the primary target! The only Squadron in the 15th AF to hit the Primary Target on the 27th

of June 1944. Of course seven B-17s could not knock it out, but set them back a day or two in the war effort. Colonel Rice told me he was putting me in for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"My next mission gave me just about all the thrills I would ever want in the war! It was to the Oil Refineries at Blechhammer, Germany on the 7th of July. To get there we had to go between Vienna and Budapest, then known as 'FLAK ALLEY.' We would come out very much the same route. The enemy fighter jocks in that area were the very best the Axis could put up. We were fortunate that our own P-51s, with the new drop tanks, could make it all the way to the target with us.

"Our Group made it through 'FLAK ALLEY' in pretty good shape and we didn't have any passes from the fighters because of the P-51s. As we approached the target, the flak got as bad as I had ever seen it! The number five man in my formation got a direct hit in the nose, and blew it off, with all four officers, at the wing root. Whitaker reported that there was only one guy that got out, the radio operator, but he hit the vertical stabilizer on the tail. Of course he was killed instantly. Whitaker said it stayed level for just a moment and then did a wing over and spun in. No other chutes were seen. The co-pilot of number three element (49th Squadron, lead aircraft) was mortally wounded and his body fluids covered the pilot and engineer, but they got the plane home.

"As we came off the target we were hit by several Me-109s and FW-190s, and I could see Vander Mullen up in the nose firing away with his twin 50-cal. guns in our 'Chin Turret.' He reminded me of a guy standing up and driving a wagon team and yelling as he fired. Something came through the center of our windshield and took out our magnetic compass. It was either a 20mm shell or a piece of flak. It banged around in the cabin and punctured several of our low pressure oxygen bottles. They let out a SPEE..YOW!, as in beans, only louder. The whole cabin filled with a condensation from the ruptured tanks. At first it looked like smoke and I thought we were on fire! I checked all the instruments and found that we were still running on all four engines. I then started checking both arms and legs as I had been told you didn't feel it if you lose one. I was afraid to look at the co-pilot as I just knew that he and Nicolosi had been wiped out. I finally took a peek to my right and there he was, checking every part of his body and finally, in a shaky voice asked, 'You all right Beech?' Then Nicolosi came forward to see how both of us were doing and then made a report to the rest of the crew that we were still OK up front.

"There was a heck of a lot of firing by the boys in the back. Charles Nelson, right waist gunner, was so intent on tracking a fighter, making a side pass, that he walked about ten rounds through the tail of our wing man. The pilot asked which side we were on? We were lucky he didn't kill someone.

"Our only casualty was Tommy Russell, tail gunner. He had been firing away at fighters making a tail pass and then his guns jammed. He had to get out of his seat and crawl forward to get to his guns. While he was working on them, a 20mm shell exploded right where his head would have been if he were still firing his guns. A piece of it went through his flak helmet and grazed his skull. He was knocked out for some time before Matt Roberts started checking him out. The whole tail canopy was blown out plus a part of the rudder. But, the old plane still flew good. Matt pulled him forward and administered first aid and he was conscious by the time we got home. He had to be in the infirmary for a while. A short time later we lost all oil pressure in No. two engine and had to feather it. It seems one flak battery had knocked a hole in our oil tank. It was that kind of day. Even today, the word Blechhammer scares me to death.

"The last of my missions seemed to go pretty fast. Then my final mission on August 28, 1944. Vander Mullen flew my last mission with me even after he had finished his final mission on August 24. So, he wound up credited with 52 missions.

"Old #118, 'SNAFUPERMAN' went down on August 29, on a mission to the Privoser Oil Refineries in Czechoslovakia. The 20th Squadron lost all seven of their aircraft to enemy fighters.

"Colonel Simon told Vander Mullen and me that he could find us a job if we wanted to stay, but we decided we would rather go home. We got orders to go to a replacement depot in Naples to await boat transportation to the States. One evening I was called out and given the DFC and informed that I would be flown home by C-47. I guess they had one extra seat and the DFC was one way of deciding who got the seat. That meant leaving all the members of the crew and that evening all the enlisted men came to me and said they would like to fly with me again if I ever got another combat assignment. Vander Mullen and I had our own private party that night. He gave me his Bombardier's Wings and I gave him my Pilot's Wings.

"I met Vander Mullen one time after that. He came through Andarko in 1949 with his new bride on the back of his motorcycle. I was on leave after returning from the Berlin airlift. He was getting ready to go to Korea as a bombardier on a B-50. He was killed on a B-50 take-off accident a few weeks after that. I still treasure his Wings."

Note: Charles Beecham is a renowned artist and his painting of a four plane element of the 20th Squadron, over the target at Budapest, hangs in the Daedacian Room of the Tinker Air Force Base Officer's Club. He also designed the 2nd Bombardment Group monument and sculpt the bronze eagle on the monument. This monument is in the Memorial Garden of the U.S.A.F. Museum at Wright-Patterson Field, Dayton, Ohio.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 228 - JULY 8, 1944

Twenty-seven aircraft, loaded with 500-lb. GP bombs, dropped their bombs on the Vosendorf Oil Refinery in Vienna. A heavy smoke screen over the target limited observation. A good pattern of bombs was observed in the target area. Flak was heavy and intense. Twenty-five B-17s received some flak damage and five crewmen were injured. There were no losses.

PLOESTI, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 229 - JULY 9, 1944

Colonel John D. Ryan led 28 aircraft and 26 dropped their load of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Xenia Oil Refinery in this city. Two aircraft had engines out; jettisoned their bombs. Flak was moderate to intense resulting in injury to nine men and damage to 22 aircraft. The target was well covered and several fires were seen. Six Me-109s attacked and 1st Lt. George McAllister, 20th Squadron was credited with destruction of one Me-109, and a joint claim of one Me-109 went to 2nd Lt. G. W. Schuster, N, and S/Sgt. J. M. Butler, U/T, both of the 20th Squadron.

VERONA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 230 - JULY 13, 1944

Major James G. Ellis led 27 aircraft to bomb the Latesana Railroad Bridge at Verona. The target was cloud covered and the Group dropped its bombs on the Marshalling Yards. Bombing was described as only fair. Flak was slight, intense, inaccurate heavy type but resulting in the death of S/Sgt. Chester A. Smith, LW, 96th Squadron.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY - MISSION NO. 231 - JULY 14, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft, with a bomb load of six, 1,000-lb. GP bombs, took off to bomb the Fanto Oil Refinery in Budapest. Eighty-one tons of bombs were dropped on the target and several fires and explosions were observed. One plane was an early return. No injuries, no losses.

PLOESTI, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 232 - JULY 15, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 84 tons of 500-lb. RDX bombs. The target was cloud covered and bombing was by PFF. Results were unobtainable due to clouds. Flak was intense, accurate and heavy resulting in damage to 11 B-17s and injury to eight men.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 233 - JULY 16, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off to bomb the Winterhafen Oil Refinery in Vienna. Twenty-six aircraft dropped 86 tons of 200-lb. bombs by PFF due to clouds over the target and results were not known.

Flak was intense, accurate, heavy of the barrage and tracking type. Two B-17s were lost as a result of flak. B-17 #42-102932, 96th Squadron, suffered a direct hit and two to three chutes were seen. #42-38025, 49th Squadron, suffered a direct hit over the target with one chute seen to open. Nineteen aircraft suffered minor damage.

2nd Lt. D. L. Stillman, B, 96th Squadron, and Sgt. John M. Deiter, RO, 429th Squadron, were slightly wounded.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38025 - "WINGED FURY" - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Robert R. O'Brien, 0-806136, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Norwine O. Ostgulan, 0-693577, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Robert G. Morlan, 0-785696, N.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Earl L. Jorgensen, 0-752336, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	James H. Kelly, 32481674, U/T.	(DED)* (POW)
S/Sgt.	James R. Frampton, 12080465, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert A. Squires, 35580434, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Faye W. Bryner, 19171257, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Henry P. Wagner, 16009758, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert C. Winters, 16169652, R/O.	(POW)

*Disappeared while on forced march from POW camp.

Statement of Captain Earl L. Jorgensen, B, after liberation: "We were flying Squadron lead. We left the Group less than a minute after bombs away. As far as I know, all bailed out safely except Lt. O'Brien and Lt. Morlan. After informing Lt. O'Brien of 'bombs away,' he acknowledged, and then we were hit. I have heard that he was hit in the cockpit and killed instantly, but that is only hearsay. This was in a letter from one of the crew. As soon as the ship was hit, it went into a dive and the co-pilot made it to the nose hatch but the pilot never made an appearance.

"Lt. Morlan was knocked unconscious while the ship was in a slow spin. When the ship was hit, I was knocked off the bombardier's chair and yelled that I had been hit. He reached for a first aid kit and then the ship went into a spin. Lt. Morlan and I rolled around in the nose not unlike being in a revolving barrel. When we came out of the spin, Lt. Morlan was lying on his back by the escape hatch. He was unconscious and I was lying in the bombardier's chair. I shouted to Lt. Morlan and attempted to crawl to him but because of my broken leg, and the ship had sharply slanted, I could not reach him. After a short while, I was forced to bail out through the broken nose. I left the ship at about 4,000 feet. I watched the ship to the ground. Lt. Morlan never got out."

S/Sgt. Henry P. Wagner, TG on B-17 #42-38205. April 8, 1992: "Your welcome note and information arrived today. The fact that Lt. Jorgensen made it out of the aircraft made my day! All these years I have been under the impression that the nose and pilot never got out. I didn't see him get out. Red Ostgulan told me while we were in jail in Vienna, that a direct hit in the nose wiped out the men in it plus O'Brien. Simultaneously a second burst in the bomb bay started a fire in that area. So at that point we were burning in two places, No. 3 engine and mid-ship.

"As for Kelly, if memory serves me correctly, I last saw him at the end of March, 1945. He, like many others was in sad shape and marching along a back road, or trail, on the east side of the Elbe River.

I do not remember the exact spot. I feel that somewhere along the march he just gave up, like so many others on the march, and was buried in some unmarked grave. My time with the 2nd was short lived. This was my first and last mission."

S/Sgt. Robert C. Winters, RO on A/C #42-38205. April 28, 1992: "I was not a regular member of this crew and don't remember if it was a make-up crew or if the members had been together for some time. I had been transferred from the 301st Bomb Group, to the 2nd, after my pilot had been shot down and the bombardier killed. I had been in the 2nd about three months and only flew as a standby radio operator.

"I first met my crew on the day of the mission. I had flown one other time with Lt. O'Brien. We had another mission together, which was scrubbed before take-off. It was a mission to Ploesti with a brand new crew. We were both happy that it was canceled!

"On the day of the mission there was the usual early morning wake-up call, breakfast and briefing. I went to the radio operators' briefing and got the usual things needed; distress calls, and other frequencies to be used, bomb strikes, etc.

"We were flying in the No. 2 spot and deputy lead. We took off about 7:00 a.m. and all was going well. We were over the I.P. at about 1040 and started our bomb run. I was standing in the radio room with my 50 when I heard the bombs away. I was about to sit down and record or send out the 'bombs away' when we got hit. I don't know if we got hit in the nose, as from the radio room there is no way to tell. However, I do know we took a direct hit in the No. 3 engine and it was burning. I was knocked to the floor, but seemed unhurt. I pushed the two IFF buttons and put on my chute, which was on top of the radio, and hooked it to my harness. At this time I knew it was time to leave or die. I checked the ball turret on my way out and it appeared the gunners had bailed out. No one remained in the waist and the tail appeared clear. I swung out the hatch and opened my chute. Don't look down to see if your chute opens, as I did, and it hit me in the face. From my chute I could watch the aircraft until it exploded. I had no idea of what altitude it blew up. I landed in a soft field and unhooked my harness. About this time many farmers appeared with pitchforks, and then four German soldiers arrived, held them at gun point and I was taken to a local jail. A little later, Lt. Ostgulan was brought in. He had blood on the side of his head. The Germans saw I had been hit on the head and they cleaned both our wounds. The Lt. and I were taken to some officer's home and treated nicely (wine), and at lunch time the Lt. went with officers to the officers mess while I went to another mess hall where I met Sgt. Frampton.

"We stayed together until they marched us out of Stalag Luft IV in February 1945. All but Sgt. Kelly stayed together. I got sick on the march and was sent to another camp and then sent to a POW hospital. The American doctor said there was no need to put me in the hospital but the German doctor insisted, as I had pneumonia. I stayed there for about two weeks and was sent to convalescent barracks, all British troops, a great bunch of guys.

"About two days before the Russians arrived, the Germans said they were leaving and the Americans and British should go with them to the American lines at the Elbe River. We decided to stay and wait for the Russians. That was the biggest mistake of our lives! When the Russians arrived one night, all hell broke loose. We thought we were at last free and would be going home. It didn't turn out that way. The Russians moved us to better quarters in nice brick barracks. Then had three guards on our door everyday. We were allowed out less time than the Germans gave us. I saw them shoot several people (Germans, English and an American). I don't know the reason. As for food, we were allowed to go to farms and ask. If the farmer refused, he would be shot by a Russian guard. Finally three guys escaped to the American lines at the Elbe. Within three days, there were American trucks with a Lt., Sgt. and three other enlisted men with food and cigarettes. The Russians took us to the Elbe as they

would not allow an American in to take the Americans and British out. Over at last! Our treatment by the Russian Allies was far worse than we ever received from the Germans.

"I know nothing of Sgt. Kelly. I did receive two inquiries from the Government but could give no information."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-102932 - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	John N. Harrington, 0-1169141, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Lawrence L. Jenkins, 0-746988, CP.	(POW)
1st Lt.	Henry E. Sievers, Jr., 0-712685, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Arthur E. Cox, 0-819531, B.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Louis (NMI) Kanner, 32329384, U/T.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	James K. Roche, 11117296, L/T.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Randolph M. Steelman, 32793174, R/W.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Robert E. Boulware, 38406415, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Owen L. Bruce, 37346386, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Raymond J. Vos, 19163299, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of S/Sgt. Joseph H. Belevich, TG on B-17 #715, after the mission: "I saw the whole nose section blown off #932 by a direct flak hit. The front part floated up and then down. Flames were coming out of No. 3 engine and the bomb bay. The plane turned to the left, apparently under control, then went down in a sliding dive. The chin turret was barely hanging on. This was the last I saw of #932. I did not see any chutes. This was just south of the target area at 1045 hours from 22,000 feet."

I corresponded with Lawrence Jenkins in early 1991, and received his story of that fateful day and the subsequent incarceration in prison, hospitals, and prison camps. His complete story had been published in *HOME BY CHRISTMAS*, by Martin Bowman, Patrick Stevens Limited.

Lt. Jenkins suffered flash burns to both eyes from exploding oxygen bottles but managed to find his chute and fasten it on. In leaving his seat, he found both legs broken. He dragged himself from his seat, managed to crawl up to the bomb bay, and fell into it. Weak from loss of blood and lack of oxygen, he felt that this was the end. He felt a hand on his shoulder and pointed to the emergency release for the bomb bay doors. They opened, he fell out, pulled the rip cord and lost consciousness.

He came to while being dragged through a field, heard voices, was grabbed and again lost consciousness. Coming to in a German first aid station, he was told that his legs would need to be amputated. The suffering was terrible and felt he did not care. The Germans picked him up, carrying him in his parachute to a nearby truck and transported him to a hospital. A wound was found in his left arm, believed to have come from ground fire while parachuting. He was given a shot, lost consciousness and did not awaken for three days.

Lt. Jenkins remained in this hospital until October 18th, legs bandaged in paper bandages and legs supported by metal trays. His legs were so badly swollen that casts could not be used.

His first operation was to have a pin through his foot and he was not sedated. He was put to sleep for the second operation. The doctor who was to perform the next operation, had a mental breakdown and was removed from the hospital. His wife and 15 year old daughter were killed in a bombing raid.

In September he was scheduled for repatriation but the continual bombings, in and around the Vienna area, prevented the Germans from getting him out. Instead, he spent the winter at Krems, Austria. From the hospital he was carried from bus to bus and finally a train. His possessions were a pair of pajamas, four slices of black bread and some cheese.

At Krems he was placed on a cart, awaiting transportation to a POW camp. It was cold, started to snow, and he wondered if he would live through the night. Early the next morning, he was picked up and taken to Stalag 7B.

Lawrence was put in a room with a Romanian who was very ill. Frenchmen would bring water and what little food was available. An American flying suit was given to him to keep warm. The Gestapo came for it and Lawrence tore the zipper so they let him keep it. He was eventually moved to another room with five Americans and several other nationalities. The room kept changing as men died or became well. He remained there until May 10, 1945.

His treatment all this time was a horror story. The bones would not heal. Food was so poor that no calcium would form. Holes were cut in both legs and holes were drilled through the bone to let marrow grow. One drill broke off and was difficult to remove. New casts were made to support the bones. They were strips of plaster held tight by the knee bone. He could feel the bones moving around while standing. The pain was excruciating while attempting to stand and it took weeks of work before being able to stand for a few minutes. It took a month to break the knee joints loose by use of weights and moving them back and forth for eight hours a day. He now could walk with crutches for a short distance at a time. He received his first letter from his parents in February, 1945.

One day he managed to reach an open door and the fresh air nearly knocked him down. He couldn't believe the room was so stinking from all kinds of infection.

The war was coming closer and big guns could be heard firing into Vienna. American fighter planes became very active in the area and one flew over them one day and wagged his wings as he flew by. They knew the Americans were aware of the camp.

Lawrence said that the Germans moved all of the Americans out of the camp except those who could not walk. The Russians became very active around their camp and the Germans reinforced their positions with 88mm cannons. The Americans felt they were in a no man's land and would hide as the Germans and Russians fired back and forth. There was neither food nor water and the men were hungry, thirsty, dirty, tired, and many were becoming ill.

The Germans finally retreated and the Russians came into the camp, cut the barbed wire and many prisoners took off in the direction of Krems. Lawrence and 11 other Americans remained in camp, uncertain of what would happen. Lawrence said, "I made it to the guard shack and broke everything that was breakable. This was my revenge." The Russians gave them food, wine or vodka, and they got stinko!

One morning two American ambulances arrived and they were given some bread and told they must move quickly to the American lines, 40 miles away. Devastation along the way was terrible! They were stopped several times by Russians, searched and made to drink toasts to them. They finally arrived at Linz and were forced to attempt to cross three different bridges before the Russians permitted them to cross.

Lawrence remained in the hospital in Linz for two weeks, his first real food being a hamburger and a glass of milk, which would not stay down. He was moved to an airstrip near Munich and flown to Rheims, France. There he started receiving food four to five times a day, as he could only eat small amounts at a time.

Lawrence arrived at Percy Jones Hospital in June, 1945. One leg was in a cast and the other treated by a brace. His eyes had recovered from the burns. He was promoted to Captain and discharged from the hospital July 21, 1947. His desire to become an airline pilot was not possible due to the extent of his injuries. He eventually went to school and pursued a career in electronics.

His powerful story was dramatized on an Army Radio Show from Percy Jones Hospital in January, 1946, when he was chosen, "Man of the Week" at age 21. He earned his pilot's wings at the age of 19.

Captain Jenkins found that S/Sgt. Raymond J. Vos was the man who aided him from his aircraft. In 1984, Jenkins was instrumental in obtaining the Purple Heart for Vos, who also had been wounded, but it had not been reported. Then in 1987, he was responsible for obtaining the Distinguished Flying Cross for Vos, for saving his life.

MEMMINGEN, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 234 - JULY 18, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off at 0555 hours and 23 aircraft dropped 63 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Airdrome at Memmingen. Four aircraft returned early with one dropping 12, 500-lb. bombs on a railroad bridge at Letessen, Italy. The primary target was well covered. There was no flak. Two Me-109s were seen but did not attack. B-17 #42-31889, 429th Squadron, was reported missing. This aircraft was having trouble keeping up with the formation, was seen to jettison its bombs and head due west, under control.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31889 - "MAMMY YOKUM III" - 429TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Millard F. Pedigo, 0-751029, P.	(INTERNED)*
2nd Lt.	Francis E. Barratt, 0-818810, CP.	(INTERNED)
Capt.	Mark O. Glasgow, 0-419271, N.	(INTERNED)
1st Lt.	Sidney (NMI) Hurwitz, 0-681756, B.	(INTERNED)*
T/Sgt.	William T. Poplowski, 32626560, U/T.	(INTERNED)*
Sgt.	Angelo (NMI) Martucci, 31140783, L/T.	(INTERNED)
S/Sgt.	Paul L. Johnson, 14083736, R/W.	(INTERNED)
S/Sgt.	Samuel (NMI) Byer, 36328701, L/W.	(INTERNED)
S/Sgt.	Eugene (NMI) Eisner, 12193582, T/G.	(INTERNED)*
T/Sgt.	William E. Aeschbacher, 35396652, R/O.	(INTERNED)

*Known to have escaped from Switzerland

Statement of S/Sgt. Eugene Eisner, after escape: "Sam Byer made an attempt to escape but was caught and put in prison. I last saw him November 15, 1944. Lt. Hurwitz evaded from Switzerland sometime in November 1944. He returned to the 429th Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group at Foggia, Italy sometime in the latter part of November 1944, went to Naples where he boarded a boat for the States. It was aboard this boat that I met him. We left Naples December 10, 1944, arriving in New York, December 23rd.

"I was told that all the officers and T/Sgt. Bill Poplowski had escaped but am not sure of the others and not sure about all the officers."

T/Sgt. William E. "Bud" Aeschbacher, RO. July 31, 1991: "I first was with the 21st Anti-Submarine Squadron in Gulfport, Mississippi, and in October 1943 the Squadron moved to Ephrata, Washington, and became the nucleus of the 483rd Bombardment Group in B-17s. I was assigned to the 817th Squadron and flew as radio operator with the CO, William Lanford, and Operations Officer, Captain Lowery, to McDill Field, Tampa, Florida, where we began our overseas training. The CO made our Squadron insignia Li'l Abner characters - thus our plane was named 'MAMMY YOKUM.'

"March 1, 1944, we left Tampa with our ship, 'MAMMY YOKUM,' for Africa and arrived there March 22nd. After landing in North Africa, we heard that some crews were to be transferred. Our crew had a quick meeting and volunteered, figuring that it would be better to fly with an outfit who were used to combat and aircraft repair, as the 483rd BG were all as 'green' as we were. Four planes were sent to the 2nd Bomb Group at Amendola, one plane to a Squadron. We were assigned to the 429th.

"My first mission was on April 4th to Steyr, Austria, the second to Bucharest, Romania, and the third to Ploesti, Romania. Nine were easy missions. I went to Ploesti five times, Southern France four times. I flew the Shuttle Mission to Russia.

"I flew my first five sorties in 'MAMMY YOKUM,' A/C #42-32031, and on the 5th, April 8th, we belly landed with a full load of bombs and walked away with no injuries to the crew. We did not get credit for the mission.

"We were assigned to A/C #42-38078. Some called it 'SWEET PEA' but we called it 'MAMMY YOKUM II.' I then flew my 8th mission in her and on my 46th mission, July 15th, to Ploesti, we blew an engine and she went in for repair. It was with great interest that I heard later of her terrible damage on the mission to Debreczen, Hungary.

"July 18, 1944, we were assigned to #42-31889 for a mission to the airfield at Memmingen, Germany. We had engine trouble, engines were running hot. Over Innsbruck we salvoed our bombs and headed for home. No. 3 engine started vibrating badly and it couldn't be feathered. The other engines were running hotter and we knew we couldn't get home so our pilot headed for Switzerland. Swiss fighters found us in their airspace and escorted us to an airfield at Dubendorf. I later heard that my old outfit, the 483rd, lost 14 planes on that raid.

"We were first placed in an Enlisted Men's Camp in Adelboden and the officers in Davos. During the peak of our raids over Germany, so many planes headed for Switzerland that another EM's camp was opened in Wengen, high up in the mountains. It was a ski resort with little, or no, access other than by train. I was the 1st Sergeant of the camp. We were housed in three hotels and had over 300 men.

"I took part in planning escapes. Once the Allies were at the southern border of Switzerland, our escapes were made easier. When we were repatriated, in February 1945, our shipping orders showed 211 EM and 3 Officers. Three Germans were released for each American.

"Just recently I obtained a copy of our interrogation report, by the Swiss, and in it was a statement that they had found sand in our oil. No wonder the engines were running hot. I also received a Swiss damage report that 79 flak holes and other damage was found to the aircraft. #42-31889 was eventually scrapped, the fuselage cut in half behind the wings."



T/Sgt. William E. Aeschbacher - Interned - Switzerland 7-18-44
(Courtesy - William Aeschbacher)

S/Sgt. Wilbert "Bud" Knecht was a Waist Gunner on the crew of Lt. Robert

Kravet. April 4, 1994: "I see by the date of this letter that nearly 49 years have passed since I was assigned to the 96th Squadron of the 2nd Bomb Group. I did keep a diary, against orders at that time, which has helped greatly in recounting some of the following story.

"Our crew was originally assigned to the 8th Air Force and we were assigned to a base at Grafton Underwood. My first mission was on March 16, 1944 to Augsburg, Germany, and then to Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany, then next to Frankfurt, Germany. On this mission we got lost from the Squadron, in the clouds, and when we finally found the Squadron, a tail gunner thought we were a Me-210 and emptied his ammo box at us from 1,500 yards. Our next mission was to Berlin and we were in flak for over one and one-half hours. No. 5 was to Munster, Germany, and this was the first time we had fighter escort, which was the RAF. No. 6 was on the 'rocket coast' in the Pas de Calais area. The

flak was as bad as Berlin and two Forts blew up damn close by. We had hits in the ball turret and bomb bay. We had two more missions, one to Dijon, France and the other to Tours, France. We had flown eight missions and when assigned to the 15th in Italy, we got credit with two for one, so then we had 16 under our belts.

"We left the 8th Air Force on April 4, 1944, spent four days in London and left England on April 18th. After stops in Casablanca, Algiers, Bizerte, Tunis, Catania, Bari, Foggia, and finally Amendola on April 24, 1944, then assigned to the 96th Squadron. HOME AT LAST!

"While in training in the States, I met a fellow named Jarvel Hawk and while in Salt Lake City, waiting for assignment, I borrowed \$20.00 from him right before payday. Then they shipped us out before payday. I told him I would keep in touch, then our crew was sent to England. On the first day in the 96th, I was going to the mess hall and the first guy I ran into was Jarvel Hawk. I paid him and told him if he ever felt nervous on a mission, I'd hold his wallet for him 'til he got back. He was a hard guy to beat in a card game.

"I flew my first mission with the 96th on April 30th to Reggio Amilio, Italy. The next target was Ploesti. The flak was very heavy and I saw two Forts go down and saw an enemy plane attacking four stragglers.

T/R-L/R - A. Martucci, E. Eisner, S. Byer
B/R-L/R - W. Poplowski, P. Johnson
Interned - Switzerland 7-18-44
(Courtesy - William Aeschbacher)

was to Wiener Neustadt and we ran into 12 Me-109s. One Fort blew up. Every time we turned we were hit. Had 30 flak holes that day.

"May 13 we went to Bolzano, Italy to hit a couple of bridges. As usual we flew over water as far as we could but as soon as we turned in over the coast we ran into flak. Right after that, two groups



of enemy fighters came up and behind, one group high and the other group lined up four abreast at seven o'clock, level. They looked like they were parked on our left stabilizer. They were 109s with yellow nose spinners. These were the only ones that attacked us. They would come in four at a time, break off and dive, then go back and get in line again. Right before they broke off, the next bunch would start in. I was at the left waist and would follow them down after they broke off 'till they were out of range, then swing up in time to pick up the next bunch. After the third bunch, as I was swinging up to pick up the next bunch, out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of them roll over and start back up underneath us. I gave him my undivided attention. He came up within 200 yards of us, never fired a gun, fell over on his back and went into a dive. I alerted our tail gunner to keep an eye out for one hitting the ground and he confirmed it. A bunch of P-51s came in high and tore into the group that had been watching the show, and tore them up something fierce. The group that had been attacking us hit the deck and got out of there. During the damage check, the tail gunner said that the left horizontal stabilizer and elevator looked like a 20mm hit it. I took a quick look and saw that I had hit it twice. There was a group of four and a group of three spaced about the same distance apart as the barrels on a turret. I told the pilot it looked like it would hold if he could fly it, and he said it was flying all right for him so we went on and finished the mission.

"When we landed, the Engineering Officer asked me where the ball turret gunner was and I convinced him that the ball turret couldn't do it so he asked where the top turret man was so I told him that the top turret man couldn't do it and confessed to my indiscretion. He accepted that explanation and began tearing me up one side and down the other. Our pilot outranked the Engineering officer and he got out of the plane and saw what was going on and joined in the conversation and politely gave the Engineering officer a lesson in how to really 'ream Anus' while patting me on the back. Needless to say, I didn't get credit for my 109.

"A couple of days later, one of our officers told us that the high group of 109s were a graduating class of cadets watching how the 'Abbyville Kids' did it.

"Another mission I remember well was on June 14th to an oil refinery at Budapest. Ran into heavy flak over the target and then ran into eight Me-410s about 15 minutes before leaving the enemy coast on the way home. They made one pass at our Squadron and got a Fort on our wing. The Fort's outboard gas tank was burning and it almost rammed us before he pulled away. All ten men got out before it exploded. Before we ever hit the target, three men bailed out. I got shots at three of the 410s and knocked the hell out of the last one's left engine. Last we saw of it, its engine was still smoking. A P-51, in pursuit, called back and said one Me-410 'hit the dirt.' I tried to get credit for it but they gave it to a bombardier who, one of his crew told me later, was asleep at the time. We got 23 holes that day and three ships in our Squadron had engines feathered.

"Another mission, my 37th, we went to Marshalling Yards at Verona, Italy, July 6, 1944. Ran into heavy flak over the target. Saw P-51s knock down two enemy fighters. Right after we left the target, a Fort peeled off and started down. Two men got out before it exploded. Four chutes opened in the middle of the explosion but weren't seen after that.

"July 18th we went to bomb an airfield at Memmingen, Germany. Weather was bad and everyone was recalled except our Group and the 483rd Group. We were both supposed to hit the same target but we screwed up and flew around over the ocean for an hour. The 483rd went onto Munich, an alternate, and out of 27 planes, only 12 got back. Meanwhile we flew around and found our target while the bandits that hit the 483rd were either refueling or landing to refuel. About a week later we were told that we had destroyed 200 plus planes. We had been briefed to expect 100 planes there. I don't know for sure if the 483rd losses were correct but this is what we were told later. When we left the target, a jet came at our group at 9 o'clock, a little high. I was at the left waist and he was far out when he turned into us. When he turned to us, he must have hit the throttle because black smoke poured

out all the time he was visible. Then he came through us twice as fast as the other bandits. I got off a good burst but knew I was too late. He fired what seemed to be a burst of four rockets that looked like small flak shells going off the other side of the formation. He kept going toward another Group that was way out to our right and we lost sight of him. This plane looked like a stubby piece of stove pipe. It was single engine. On 'Wings' Discovery Channel, I saw the one that took off and landed on a skid type runner that looked like the one I saw. Believe me, I wasn't the only one that saw it. As a result of all the flying around over the ocean, before going to the target, everyone was low on gas. Two of our planes had to throw out everything but the engines to get back, and two others didn't make it back. Later, one came in after refueling up the coast and the other wasn't heard from.

"July 27th, my 47th mission, we went to Budapest. We were in the lead ship today. No enemy fighters but the flak was fairly heavy and damned accurate. Two ships had to feather an engine and another had to feather two. A tail gunner in our wing ship got hit nine times, mostly in face and legs. Lost an eye, and ankle shot up pretty bad. A bunch of others wounded. We hit the target right in the middle. Major Jordan was our pilot. We were hit three times and needed a new wing tank.

"August 12th, Savona, Italy, my 50th. Target was hit better than I had ever seen it. Bombs seemed to pile up on one another. No flak at the target. Off to our right, about a mile, another Group was catching plenty of flak. One got a direct hit and blew up. Just after we left the coast a B-24 came across our course with two inboard engines on fire and heading for Corsica. One of our planes came back on three. No enemy fighters were seen. A lovely was to finish up! FINITO!"

MUNICH, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 235 - JULY 19, 1944

Major Richard Abbey, CO of the 49th Squadron, led 28 aircraft to bomb the Milbertshoven Ordnance Depot at Munich. Twenty-seven aircraft dropped their bombs on this target with results described as poor. One aircraft, an early return, dropped its bombs on oil storage tanks at Trieste, Italy with fires and explosions reported. Flak at the primary target was intense, accurate, and heavy. No injuries, no losses.

MEMMINGEN, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 236 - JULY 20, 1944

At 0700 hours, 28 aircraft took off with a load of fragmentation bombs and at 1100 hours dropped their bombs on the Airdrome at Memmingen. A good pattern was reported across the target area. Flak was light and there were no encounters with E/A.

BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MISSION NO. 237 - JULY 21, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off to bomb the Synthetic Oil Refinery at Brux. Only 19 aircraft dropped 46.875 tons of 250-lb. GP bombs, by PFF, into a smoke filled target. Results were not known. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate. There were seven early returns. One B-17 dropped 20, 250-lb. bombs on the harbor at Pola, Italy with good results.

Twelve to 20 Me-109s and FW-190s aggressively attacked the formation before the target. B-17s #42-31789, 20th Squadron, and #42-107101, 96th Squadron, were lost. 2nd Lt. Paul E. Sumner, B, 49th Squadron, was seriously wounded. S/Sgt. Walter G. Carley, TG, 20th Squadron and Cpl. Gilmer Hawkins, TG, 429th Squadron, were slightly wounded.

S/Sgt. Walter Lastowski, BT, 49th Squadron, was credited with destruction of one Me-109. S/Sgt. Walter G. Carley, TG, 20th Squadron, Cpl. William M. Spruce, RW, 429th Squadron, and Sgt. Joseph Kalisczik, TG, 429th Squadron, were each credited with possible destruction of an Me-109. Sgt. Joseph Kalisczik was also credited with damage to a Me-109.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31789 - 20TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt.	John R. MacKenzie, 0-808858, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Richard E. Dunkelberger, 0-819006, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Loren C. Rice, 0-717695, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Wylie T. Hartsfield, 0-683130, B.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Reese (NMI) Stevenson, 14098428, U/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Frank A. Rapley, 14067046, L/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Donald D. Wickland, 36740109, R/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Billy B. Owen, 17074213, L/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	Clair H. Lane, 33570593, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	George H. Suratt, 14161101, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of Sgt. Billy Owen, LW, after liberation: "I bailed out with four others. The radio operator, Suratt, followed me out the waist door. The aircraft struck the ground directly below me when I opened my chute. I saw Lt. Rice and Sgt. Stevenson the day after we were forced down. Sgt. Stevenson was in bad shape. Lt. Rice had a broken arm. I was with Sgt. Suratt and Lt. Hartsfield until July 30 at a transient camp not far from Frankfurt, Germany.

"Sgt. Wickland was hit in the side by a bullet, probably 20mm. I last saw him on the floor of the plane. I felt the plane swerve sharply, swerved around and saw him hit. He immediately fell to the floor and did not move."

Statement of 2nd Lt. Loren C. Rice, N, after liberation: "I bailed out about 20 kms south of Wels, Austria and the plane crashed near there. When we were picked up by two Germans, the engineer and myself were injured and the other three were alright.

"I believe the personnel at the hospital in Wels know about where the bodies of those killed are buried. A doctor by the name of Hartlinger was in charge of the engineer and myself while we were hospitalized there and seemed to know what happened.

"I do not believe that Lt. MacKenzie, Lt. Dunkelberger, and Sgts. Lane, Wickland, and Rapley were able to bail out of the aircraft. I believe the enlisted men were killed by enemy gunfire and Lts. MacKenzie and Dunkelberger were trapped in the falling plane. The last communication with them was just before the fighter attack. I was told by two Germans that they were buried at the scene of the crash."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-107101 - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	James E. Wagner, 0-420563, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	David A. Robins, 0-819614, CP.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	James J. Shea, 0-619734, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Herbert N. Johnson, 0-703387, B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	James P. Lutterbach, 35722248, U/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Willis L. Mehl, 39120010, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Nicholas R. Gross, 13127766, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	John B. Black, Jr., 6580067, L/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	William E. Long, 20726215, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	John W. Wick, 12093607, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of T/Sgt. T. B. Sullivan, RO on A/C #999, after the mission: "I saw fighters attack #101. It received a hit in the right wing and began losing gasoline. It then peeled off to the left and headed back. That was the last I saw of #101. I did not see any chutes."

PLOESTI, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 238 - JULY 22, 1944

Twenty-three aircraft dropped 60 tons of 1,000-lb. GP bombs on the Romano-American Refinery at Ploesti. A very effective smoke screen covered the area and bombing was done by PFF. Flak was heavy, slight to moderate resulting in damage to 12 aircraft. 2nd Lt. Fredric M. Rosemore, N, 96th Squadron, and S/Sgt. William D. Brown, RW, 20th Squadron, were slightly wounded by flak. B-17 #42-31452 was seen to jettison its bombs and turn off just before the I.P., and is missing. No encounters with E/A.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31452 - "FIFTY PACKIN' MAMA" - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Norman D. Austin, 0-811309, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	John M. Holt, 0-822441, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	George N. Mullen, 0-713212, N.	(POW)
F/O	Frederick C. Decker, T-125065, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Doyle C. Carson, 34504800, U/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Kenneth P. Baldwin, 35874291, L/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Alfred T. Pinter, 6269354, R/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	Ray F. Wylie, 35583129, L/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	Hubert R. Cagle, 34084707, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Carl C. Jones, Jr. 15057267, R/O.	(KIA)

1st Lt. Norman D. Austin, P of A/C #42-31485. April 8, 1992: "I enlisted August 8, 1942, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Had basic training in Coast Artillery at Camp Callan, California.

"Aviation Cadet, December 1942 to August 30, 1943. Graduated as pilot at George Field, Illinois. Assigned to Chanute Field, Illinois for transition training in B-17s. Transferred to Salt Lake City. Assigned a crew of nine men. Sent to Alexandria Air Base, Louisiana for three months training as a bomber crew. Transferred to Grand Island, Nebraska, a staging area to fly overseas. Due to lack of aircraft, we were sent to Langley Field, Virginia, to train navigators.

"In May of 1944, part of my crew and parts of two other crews were flown on C-54s by way of Newfoundland, Azores, North Africa, and Italy.

"I was assigned to the 20th Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group, as a replacement along with part of my original crew. My co-pilot, Lt. Owen E. Rice, Jr., was shot down over Blechhammer, Germany July 7, 1944. He was on a pick-up crew. A report came back that they had a direct burst of flak in the tail, the plane rolled over on its back and no one got out. S/Sgt. George H. Suratt was on a pick-up crew that was shot down on a mission to Brux, Czechoslovakia on July 21, 1944. I found out through the Red Cross that S/Sgt. Suratt survived and became a POW.

"Sgt. Doyle Carson was the only member of my original crew to be with me on the day we were shot down. I flew 27 missions over Southern France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Northern Italy, and Romania.

"July 22, 1944 on the mission to the Ploesti oil fields, I had engine failure short of the target. We dropped out of formation and fighters set the plane on fire. We all bailed out just before the plane exploded. One crew member, T/Sgt. Carl C. Jones, failed to open his chute. Our aircraft was #42-31452 and named 'FIFTY PACKIN' MAMA.'

"The rest of us were taken prisoner by Romanians. We were prisoners in a schoolhouse in Bucharest until Romania capitulated to the Russians, August 23, 1944. Col. James Dunn, our camp CO, was flown to Bari, Italy in an Me-109 by a Romanian fighter pilot. He contacted 15th Air Force and arrangements were made to have 1,500 POWs flown out of Romania in B-17s the first part of September, 1944.

"I returned to the United States in October 1944 and was assigned as a Flight Instructor at Marfa, Texas Advanced Flight School from January through April 1945. I was then transferred to Romulus, Michigan, A.T.C. and was checked out in C-54s. I then flew freight and hospital planes until released from duty on October 3, 1945."

2nd Lt. John M. Holt, CP, on A/C #42-31452. May 15, 1992: "I had been in the Group less than a month when I went on the mission to Ploesti, which ended up in the old school building near downtown Bucharest. Since that was my only mission in actual combat, it hardly gives me a large chunk of tall tales to talk about my adventures against the enemy. Experience in the prison camp in Bucharest has been well reported already, and it was, at least as it affected me, nothing as rigorous as comrades that went down in Germany had to face. I will say, that in several flights I have made across the Atlantic in the post war years, I've several times thought of the relatively primitive navigational system we had in 1944, when we flew that shiny, new B-17 from Savannah across the ocean to the Mediterranean via Gander, the Azores, Marrakech, and Tunis before heading for Amendola. I'm glad we had decent weather for the flight and didn't know how vast were the risks we were facing, even apart from the risk of enemy action, that didn't materialize as we flew over.

"In the immediate post war years, I finished my university degree, proceeded to seminary and was at length ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church. After publishing my book on *Patriarchs of Israel* in 1964, I received a letter from a Greek Orthodox priest in Bucharest about my book, and the following correspondence developed the information that the church had, since the war, taken over the building and was using it for educational purposes again, a gratifying bit of news.

"The first time I went back to Italy after the war, it was gratifying to see a country rebuilt and prospering as it was then, in the early 1960s. On checking in at my hotel in Foggia, I went to a travel agent, recommended by the concierge, to arrange for a car and driver to go out the next day and visit the sites of our old landing strip and 'housing' area midway between Foggia and Manfredonia. When the agent recognized that I was a veteran returning to play, 'Twelve O'Clock High,' he explained that our old air strip was now a regular base of the Italian Air Force and not open to visitors. However, the driver could take me to the other area nearby without difficulty. I could recognize the area without hesitation, once we got there; even the modern road made the same turn to the left just before going over the hill and down into Manfredonia. Not a trace of the structures, even the stone ones, that were there in 1944. A couple of tears formed at the memory of others of the Group that had died on 22 July 1944 and the many other missions, and the understanding young man noticed it. 'Molti, Amici Morti?' he asked, 'Si pooci,' I answered. Though it was well before he was born, he was compassionate enough to nod agreeably and remark, 'Si, Triste, molta, triste.'

"In a way, those three years in the Air Force are the only glamorous things I have ever done, since in those days aviation still had much of the cachet of the daring adventurers about it, before becoming the every day thing air travel (and war) are in the contemporary world. I'm grateful for the experience it gave me in completing the bonding with other adults and people from different backgrounds I hadn't had before the war and, of course, I'm glad that I came out of it alive and whole."

LINZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 239 - JULY 25, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off to bomb the Herman Goering Tank Works at Linz. One aircraft was an early return. Due to a malfunction in the lead plane, the bombs were dropped between the I.P. and the target. All planes had dropped on the lead ship. Flak was reported as heavy, slight to moderate, and inaccurate. There were no injuries and no losses.

In November, 1995, I received a letter from Karl Affenzeller, an Austrian researcher of Allied aircraft losses in Austria. Karl wrote, regarding this mission: "More than 100 heavy bombs were dropped by the 2nd Bomb Group 15 kilometers from my domicile (Freistat). At that time I was only nine years old. Nevertheless, I still remember that day quite well because my mother took my brother and me for the very first time to a spacious air raid shelter situated next to our house, inside we were quite secure, although we heard the thunderous crash of the bombs falling even there."

"Several days later I have been in the Pregarten-Hagenberg area. I noticed the destruction after the bombing and have been deeply impressed by the report of the surviving people. By my research, many inhabitants from Hagenberg, Veichter, and Pregarten have been asking me how all that could happen and why the Americans dropped bombs on us? There were no industrial plants and no military bases. One woman and one child was killed."

Austrian Frau Berta Bauer wrote: "I was born on 27th January 1923 and my name was Berta Kurz before I have been married. In the year 1944, I used to live with my parents at Klingerwehr, near Pregarten. This small village is situated in a beautiful quiet romantic valley. My parents possessed a small farm house with two milk cows, two pigs and a lot of chickens. Naturally I always had to help them working."

"On 25th July 1944 at six o'clock in the morning, I went down to the cow barn to milk and feed the animals. Afterwards I intended to go to the near forest to collect blueberries, but my mother wanted me to procure food for the chickens before. So I went to Pregarten with our handcart for shopping.

"About 11:00 a.m. - I had just left the shop and was on my way home - the siren began to scream. So I turned and went back to the shop, since no one was supposed to be in the street during an air raid. Just after a few minutes I saw the enemy bombers coming against the blue sky. They could be well seen. First I was not frightened, but suddenly the ground began to tremble, window panes clattered, and heavy detonations were to be heard in between from bombs from the direction of Hagenberg. Black clouds of dust and smoke rose from there, and they soon covered the sunlight, it got dark like in the evening. Everything had come too fast, hardly anyone found time to take shelter. The warning had come much too late.

"Finally the detonations ended and I wanted to get home fast. I took several by-ways to reach my parent's home. There was still the noise of plane engines above me, but the rest was silence around me. There was not a single bird singing and no people around. I was deeply worried about my parents and their house. Luckily there was no one killed or injured in my family. The air pressure had broken all window panes and pushed in all doors. The roof was heavily damaged. Our neighbors' home was nothing but a pile of rubble, Mrs. Karlinger was dead. Mr. Karlinger was staying with us for a while until he moved away from the area. Quite many of the houses that were damaged were not repaired before the end of the war."

WIENER NEUDORF, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 240 - JULY 26, 1944

Colonel John D. Ryan led 28 aircraft to bomb the Aircraft Factory in this city. An excellent smoke screen covered the city and the Group made two passes over the city before dropping its bombs

into the smoke. Damage could not be determined. Flak was intense, accurate and heavy, resulting in injury to four men. There were no losses.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY - MISSION NO. 241 - JULY 27, 1944

Major Lawrence Jordan, CO of the 96th Squadron, led 26 aircraft, each with a load of two, 2,000-lb. GP bombs. The target was the Manfried Weiss Armament Works. Most bombs were in the target area with some short and some over. Flak was moderate to intense and accurate. Twenty-two aircraft were damaged by flak and five men wounded.

PLOESTI, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 242 - JULY 28, 1944

Twenty-four aircraft dropped 70.5 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Astro-Romano Oil Refinery. There was a smoke screen over the target and the bombs were dropped into the smoke. Results were not obtainable but smoke from fires could be seen for miles. No losses.

PLOESTI, ROMANIA - MISSION NO. 243 - JULY 31, 1944

Twenty-six aircraft dropped 78 tons of 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Xenia Oil Refinery. The target was covered by a smoke screen and bombing was by PFF. Results were not obtainable. Flak was heavy and accurate resulting in the wounding of four men and damage to several aircraft. No losses.



Frau Berta Bauer