



**HISTORY
OF
783rd BOMB SQUADRON (H)
465th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
(1943 – 1945)
PANTANELLA, ITALY**

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HISTORY OF 783rd BOMB SQUADRON

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HISTORY

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

■ (FROM USAF RECORDS)

"The Fifteenth Air Force was activated on 1 November 1943, with Headquarters at Tunis, Tunisia and Maj. Gen. James H. Doolittle as its Commanding General. Its Headquarters was moved to Bari, Italy on 1 December 1943 and remained there for the rest of the war. On 3 January 1944, Maj. Gen. Nathen F. Twining succeeded Doolittle and remained as Commanding General of the Fifteenth until after the war.

On activation of the Fifteenth, its effective strength was 654 airplanes. On April 15, 1945, 1916 aircraft were assigned to the Fifteenth and 98 per cent of them took to the air to attack targets at the Italian front.

From the time it was established, the efforts of the Fifteenth were focused at accomplishing four main objectives. In general order of priority the objectives were:

1. To destroy the German Air Force in the air (by making it come up to fight) and on the ground, wherever it might be located within the range of the Fifteenth's planes.
2. To participate in "Operation Pointblank" (the Combined Bomber Offensive), which called for the destruction of German fighter aircraft plants, ball bearing plants, oil refineries, rubber plants, munitions factories, sub pens, and bases, etc.
3. To support the battle of the Italian mainland (mainly by attacking communications targets — in Italy, along the Brenner Pass route and also in neighboring Austria).

4. To weaken the German position in the Balkans.

Added to these objectives later was a set of targets associated with preparing the way for the invasion of southern France which took place on 15 August 1944.

The Fifteenth Air Force in its eighteen months of existence during the European World War II made a tremendous contribution to the complete and overwhelming defeat of the enemy.

- It destroyed all gasoline production within its range in Southern Europe.
- It destroyed 6,286 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.
- It contributed to the attainment of total supremacy in the skies of Europe by knocking out all major aircraft factories in its sphere.
- It crippled the enemy's transportation system over half of once-occupied Europe by repeated attacks by bombers and fighters.
- It came on many occasions to the aid of hard-pressed ground forces or spearheaded the advance of the armies of our Allies.
- It dropped 309,126 tons of bombs on enemy targets in 12 countries of Europe including major military installations in eight capital cities.
- Its combat personnel made 151,029 heavy bomber sorties and 89,397 fighter sorties against the enemy.
- The magnificent record of the Fifteenth was not accomplished without cost in the lives of brave men and the loss of 3,379 aircraft.
- The Fifteenth has made AAF history in record-breaking flights, number of operational aircraft dispatched on a single mission, longest USAF B-24 mission, and in numerous other instances which will always be proudly remembered by its entire personnel.

COUNTER-OIL OPERATIONS

An achievement in which the Fifteenth AAF is justly proud was the drying up of the German fuel supplies through attacks on oil refineries. As a result, the vaunted 20th Century Wehrmacht was forced to run on 18th Century transportation. The first attack in the coordinated campaign to eliminate German gasoline supplies began with a mission against rail yards at Ploesti April 5, 1944. The damage done in this and successive rail attacks in the great refinery town convinced AAF planners that the Fifteenth's contention that heavy bombardment could profitably be used against oil installations was sound. This commodity then received top priority for the strategic Allied bombers striking at Germany.

FIFTEENTH AF BOMBER MISSIONS TO PLOESTI

<u>Date 1944</u>	<u>Aircraft Attacking</u>	<u>Bomb Tonnage</u>	<u>Aircraft Lost</u>
5 Apr	230	587	13
15 Apr	137	316	3
24 Apr	290	793	8
5 May	485	1,257	19
6 May	135	329	6
18 May	206	493	14
31 May	481	1,116	16
6 Jun	310	698	14
23 Jun	139	283	6
24 Jun	135	329	14
9 Jul	222	605	6
15 Jul	607	1,526	20
22 Jul	495	1,334	24
28 Jul	349	913	20
31 Jul	154	435	2
10 Aug	414	952	16
17 Aug	248	534	15
18 Aug	377	825	7
19 Aug	65	144	0
TOTALS	5,479	13,469	223

465th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

█ (FROM USAF RECORDS)

Constituted as 465th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 29 May 1943. Activated on 1 August 1943. Prepared for duty overseas with B-24's. Moved to the Mediterranean theater, February to April 1944. The air echelon received additional training at Oudna Air Field, Tunisia while waiting for Pantanella Airfield, Italy to be completed. Assigned to Fifteenth Air Force. Entered combat on 5 May 1944 and served primarily as a strategic bombardment organization until late in April 1945. Attacked marshalling yards, dock facilities, oil refineries, oil storage plants, aircraft factories, and other objectives in Italy, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, and the Balkans. On two different missions — to marshalling yards and an oil refinery at Vienna on 8 July 1944 and to steel plants at Friedrichshafen on 3 August 1944 — the Group bombed its targets despite antiaircraft fire and fighter opposition, being awarded a DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION for each of these attacks. Other operations included bombing troop concentrations and bivouac areas in May 1945 to aid the Partisans in Yugoslavia; attacking enemy troops and supply lines to assist the drive toward Rome, May and June 1944; striking bridges, railroads, and gun emplacements prior to the invasion of Southern France in August 1944; bombing rail facilities and rolling stock in October 1944 to support the advance of the Russian and Rumanian forces in the Balkans; and hitting troops, gun positions, bridges, and supply lines during April 1945 in support of Allied Forces in northern Italy. Moved to the Caribbean area in June 1945. Assigned to Air Transport Command. Inactivated in Trinidad on 31 July 1945.

SQUADRONS: 780th, 781st, 782nd, and 783rd.

COMMANDERS: Col. Elmer J. Rogers Jr., 24 August 1943; Col. Charles A. Clark Jr., 13 March 1944; Lt. Col. Joshua H. Foster, 1 December 1944; Lt. Col. William F. Day Jr., 26 April 1945 to 31 July 1945.

STATIONS: Alamogordo Army Air Field, New Mexico, 1 August 1943; Kearns, Utah, September 1943; McCook Army Air Field, Nebraska, 5 October 1943 to 1 February 1944; Pantanella Air Field, Italy, April 1944 to June 1945; Waller Field, Trinidad, 15 June 1945 to 31 July 1945."



THE YEAR IN ITALY A BRIEF SUMMARY

■ *PREPARED BY LT COL WILLIAM F. DAY*

"In April 1944, when the 465th Bombardment Group (Heavy) came to Italy, the 15th Air Force was rapidly approaching full strength. The job ahead was already becoming clear. The primary job was to destroy Germany's Air Force, then to deprive her of her most vital and most vulnerable resource, OIL, and in the process to hamstring at every opportunity her railways.

A good start on driving the Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs from the air had been made during the now famous "Big Week" in February, but there still remained many aircraft factories and air facilities to level, and the enemy's oil production had as yet received only minor damage.

At the start of the operation the enemy was a fully armed, highly experienced, and deadly foe. German, Rumanian, Hungarian, and Fascist fighters were up in strength opposing nearly every attack. The enemy was well aware of his vulnerable spots and did everything in its power to protect these targets with large concentrations of fighters and heavy anti-aircraft guns.

On the first attack on 5 May 1944, a German Headquarters at Podgorica, Yugoslavia, the Group set the pace for the operations to follow. It was designed to destroy and kill — and this it did starting with 500 Germans (according to ground reports). The Group, after its freshman mission, plunged into battle with the older groups, heading out day after day for such targets as Ploesti, Wiener Neustadt, and Munich whenever weather permitted.

By early summer the German aircraft industry had received blows so crippling that full attention could be turned to Oil. One by one the great refineries of the Germans felt the weight of our bombs: Ploesti, the scattered refineries of Hungary, Blechhammer, Vienna with its seven refineries, Poland and Czechoslovakia, France and Yugoslavia.

The enemy, with its highly mobile army, great masses of aircraft, tanks, and submarines, needed vast quantities of oil. To augment what it was using from occupied countries, great synthetic plants were built. Batteries of flak to protect these targets were of large caliber and used in enormous quantities. Blechhammer and Brux, for example, each had more guns than the entire city of Munich, itself a vital communications and manufacturing center.

By winter, when crippling blows had materially halted the production of oil and the fighters which for many months had regularly attacked our formations were no longer airborne, the deadly flak continued to be a menace, and accounted for more of our losses than any other cause.

Throughout the year, railroads, presenting so many targets, could often be hit when other targets were weathered in, and were the most frequently attacked.

Fighter attacks had ceased entirely (for this Group) after 6 December 1944. By March the production of oil had stopped at every refinery in range of the 15th Air Force. In all some 56 percent of the entire German and satellite system had been destroyed. Rail traffic was in a state of chaos. Thousands upon thousands of locomotives and rolling stock and several hundred marshalling yards lay idle — a shamble of twisted steel and burned out wreckage. Gone too was the last hope of the enemy, jet-propelled aircraft, as these were bombed and strafed on their own fields. During April, the final advance by the ground forces ended the Strategic War.

The last operations of the Group were in direct support of the 5th and 8th Armies. These armies were poised below Bologna for the last battle in Italy and received magnificent support when thousands of tons were dropped on the German front lines, often within a half mile of our forward troops. The Germans in Italy, "out of gas", out of supplies, low in morale, were shattered remnants of a great army and suddenly it was ended.

The results of the 465th Group were outstanding. In the pre-invasion bombing of Southern France new bombing accuracy records were established, and throughout the year it continued in the upper brackets. The Unit held

up its end in the attacks against fighters, accounting for 67 destroyed in the first six months of operations. In conjunction with the other groups of the 55th Wing, it knocked out six oil refineries on the first and only attack, stopped production four times at the Blechhammer refineries and made a total of 45 attacks against oil installations — most of them exceptionally effective. In three attacks against pilotless and jet aircraft works the manufacturing facilities were completely demolished.

To the ground personnel must go credit for the part they played so well, for besides the good record against the enemy, the Group has maintained its enviable safety record so well established in the early days of training. Almost 10,000 hours of training were flown without accident. The Group has the best safety record in the 15th Air Force and not one fatal accident has been traced to maintenance, certainly a record in itself, and one in which these men responsible can take great pride.

All in the Group have done their jobs well; twice the Group earned a Distinguish Unit Citation and heaped destruction on the enemy in Strategic Air Warfare. The far-reaching results of such warfare are not always apparent to the men who wage it, thus it is with pride that we quote Germany's Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, "The systematic destruction from the air, coupled with the lack of fuel and raw materials, was the principal reason for Germany's defeat."

THE RECORD

Missions	191
Effective Sorties	4,749
Tonnage Dropped	10,528

<u>Enemy Aircraft</u>	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Probables</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Air	72	18	32
Ground	<u>25</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>27</u>
TOTALS	97	18	59

<u>Types of Targets</u>	<u>Attacks</u>
Oil 45	
Railroad	74
Aircraft Factories and Inst	19
Tactical Support (direct)	12
Naval Installations	8
Miscellaneous	<u>33</u>
TOTAL	191

"The rough ones" (or "Flak Alley"):	<u>Attacks</u>
Vienna (including Wiener Neustadt and Moosbierbaum O/R)	24
Munich	17
Blechhammer	13
Budapest	10
Linz	9
Ploesti	7
Friedrichshafen	3
Brux	<u>2</u>
TOTAL	85

<u>Major air battles</u>	<u>Date Destroyed</u>	<u>Probables</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Ploesti	6 June	6	4
Florisdorf	8 July	7	0
Nimes, France	12 July	10	2
Wiener-Neudorf	16 July	7	2
Friedrichshafen	3 Aug	9	5
TOTALS		39	16
			18



CHAPTER I

783rd SQUADRON ACTIVATED

Under Air Force General Order No. 78, dated 29 May 1943, the 465th Bombardment Group (H) was activated on 1 August 1943 at the Army Air Base, Alamogordo, New Mexico.

It consisted of Headquarters and four Squadrons: the 780th, 781st, 782nd, and 783rd.

This is the history of the 783rd Bombardment Squadron.

In August 1943, Capt. Burton C. Andrus, Jr. was assigned to the 783rd Bombardment Squadron (H) as its Commanding Officer. His original staff was as follows:

Executive Officer	Capt. Harry Swartz
Adjutant	2nd Lt. Allen Giellerup
First Sergeant	M/Sgt. James M. Sexton
Intelligence	2nd Lt. Paul J. Smith
Operations	1st Lt. Thomas T. Clark Jr.
Chief Operations Clerk	T/Sgt. John U. Walker
Supply	2nd Lt. Abraham Mandlovitz
Bombardier	1st Lt. John V. Knaus
Navigator	1st Lt. Joseph B. Montgomery
Surgeon	1st Lt. Charles D. Kimball
Engineering	Capt. Joseph P. Rothwell
Communications	2nd Lt. Richard H. Marsh
Armament	1st Lt. John W. Emerson

Many of the flight crews were formed in late August and September, 1943. Some of the Squadrons of the 465th Bomb Group were sent to Kearns, Utah,

for basic flight crew training. Most of the 783rd remained at Tucson for this training. During September and October the crews were busy completing the basic flight training (as a crew) and becoming more familiar with the B-24 airplane. During this phase of training, most of the airplanes were B-24D's. The planes were not in very good mechanical condition because of the heavy flight schedule each day plus the many hours they had flown. On one occasion, a B-24 lost a wheel on takeoff, but the pilot brought the plane in without anyone getting hurt. By the end of September this phase of training was completed.

Under Special Order No. 4, dated 4 October 1943, the 465th Bombardment Group (H) was ordered to the Army Air Base, McCook, Nebraska, to begin its three phases of combat training. Five of the 783rd combat crews, assigned to the 39th Bomb Group (H), Tucson, Arizona, were transferred from Tucson to McCook under Special Order Number 39, dated 12 October 1943, with instructions to report no later than 27 October. Six other combat crews were transferred to McCook under Special Order Number 334 dated 30 November 1943.

McCook Army Air Base

□ Patrick Casey

Extracted from McCook Daily Gazette Centennial Book

"With raging Adolph Hitler and the Germans to contend with in Europe and the Japanese to battle in the Pacific, it took all the resources communities like McCook could muster.

Like every other city and town across the nation, McCook did more than its share to make the war effort a valiant venture. Perhaps the biggest contribution made by the city was the successful operation of the Army Air Base.

The Army Air Base, located approximately eight miles northwest of McCook, was assigned the task of training Heavy Bombardment Groups for combat duty during World War II.

The base was organized into three main divisions: the 520th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron; the Bomb Groups; and detachments such as the Medical Detachment, the 23rd Medical Detachment, and the 23rd airway Communications Squadron. At first there were a number of other detachments on the base but these were later consolidated into the 520th Base Headquarters and no longer existed as separate units.

The 520th Base Headquarters, as distinguished from the training groups and other temporary detachments, was the administrative organization of the base. It was activated on April 1, 1943 and provided for a 20 percent cadre from the 360th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron, Army air Base, Pueblo, Colorado.

The base occupied about 2,100 acres which included three concrete runways to originally handle B-24 Liberator Bombers which were later replaced with B-17 Flying Fortresses and the B-29 Super Fortresses. Two of the runways were 7,525 feet and the third was 7,454. All were 150 feet wide. Four hangars were on the base. One measured 210 by 202 feet, with a 25 foot high door. Three of the hangars were 202 by 115 feet, also with a 25 foot high door.

Maj. James E. Barnett arrived in McCook on July 5, 1943 and became the base executive officer.

On October 30, an OTU training detachment, consisting of 21 officers and 43 enlisted men, arrived at the base and was attached to the 520th Base Headquarters Squadron for quarters, rations, and administration.

Consolidation of all Base Squadrons and Detachments, except the Medical Detachment, the 23rd Airways Communications, and the 23rd Weather Region, was accomplished at the end of November under the command of the 520th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron. Previously, the various attachments had been attached to the 520th for rations, administration, and quarters.

At the end of November, all detachments except the 23rd Airways Communications Squadron, the 23rd Weather Region, and the Medical Detachment lost their separate identities and were consolidated into the 520th Base Headquarters and Air Base Squadron. As a result of the consolidation, the organization of the base was simplified to permit a more unified command with orders emanating from one officer. The 520th was now organized into three divisions: Administration and Services, Maintenance and Supply, and the Director of Training.

It was a constant problem to secure civilian personnel for the air base. Most of the clerical and skilled labor had to be "imported." Most of the clerical work was performed by wives of officers and men on the base

under federal civil service employment. Housing facilities were poor; transportation to the base uncertain.

A high labor turnover was the result. Federal housing agencies did not cooperate. The problem never attained a solution and the base was constrained to operate despite the difficulty. The base also experienced great difficulty in obtaining military personnel, both officers and enlisted men. The number of men was always far below the number authorized.

In the early weeks, before the Supply Organization of the base had begun to function, all supplies came from the air base in Kearney. As a result, supplies were scarce. Even food, at first, was trucked in from Kearney. A supply shortage continued even after quarter-master and sub-depot stocks commenced operations.

Transportation to and from the McCook Army Air Base was also always difficult. The base was reached from McCook by 11 miles of dusty, winding roads. In wet weather, mud was a problem to be overcome. In dry weather, dust was a problem. The first bus which ran between the base and town was an old, red school bus which ran infrequently and often broke down en route. The sight of passengers pushing it was a common one. Legend has it that the bus mechanic waited at the passenger station because, "I know they will call me anyway." It was reported that civilians often started out to the base for work but because of the conditions frequently turned back. Finally, to alleviate the problem, a trailer bus was put on the run giving dependable service at 45-minute intervals, charging 20 cents per trip. Dust control measures were adopted, such as oiling and sprinkling the roads and planting grass.

Other problems included the housing of civilian employees. McCookites aided the solution by opening their doors to the workers. A federal housing project was initiated but abandoned. Government trailers were also installed on the base, which alleviated the situation somewhat.

The air base was built by private contractors under the supervision of a U.S. Army engineer in two "projects" and was changed by additions and alterations by the base engineers. The first "project" contemplated the construction of a satellite airfield upon a naturally level plateau, averaging 2,750 feet above sea level. The runways of the field were arranged to form an isosceles triangle with the base

running due east and west. The runways, taxiways, apron and hardstand areas were paved with concrete pavement, seven inches thick and with thickened edges, 10 inches thick. The pavement design was based on wheel load of 60,000 pounds and a tire pressure of 67.5 pounds per square inch. No allowance was made for landing impact.

The base housing facilities were oriented with the northwest-southeast runway, which was the direction of the prevailing winds. Also, an unobstructed view of several miles of the countryside was attainable from any portion of the field. The contemplated airfield facilities were sufficient to house and sustain 260 officers and 752 enlisted men.

Due to the scarcity of bidders with sufficient equipment or financial strength to assume responsibility for the entire project, it was necessary to divide the work into six branches, thereby making it possible for several concerns to submit offers on the work.

This expedient produced good results except in connection with the paving, which contract had to be renegotiated because of the inability of the first contractor to provide sufficient payment bonds. That resulted in a 23-day delay in the project and some of the concrete work was concluded in snowy, winter weather. No labor disturbances occurred on the project, though, at times, relations were strained.

Planning for the building project began on September 3, 1942 and concluded on October 19. Construction began on the following September 16 and was completed on December 19, 1943. The McCook Satellite Airfield was changed to an independent airfield and further construction was authorized by the Army on January 29, 1943.

The field was expanded to a Type C Heavy Bombardment Airfield, embracing additional housing facilities, mess areas, functional and utility buildings, a hospital unit, three hangars with aprons, wider taxiways, extensions to the utility system, and the acquisition of three small parcels of land. The original parcel of land, generally rectangular in shape, contained 1,830 acres, to which 174 acres were added. The maximum dimensions were now about one-and-three-quarter miles north and south and two-and-a-half miles east and west.

Capacity to house an additional 160 officers and 1,800 enlisted men made the total housing capacity 384 officers and 2,500 men. Capacity

to feed an additional 100 men made the total mess capacity 360 officers 1,840.

The new hospital's housing capacity was 41 officers and nurses and 100 enlisted men. It had messing capacity for 50 officers and nurses and 288 men. It had a total of 118 beds.

Construction work on the principal building and construction contract of the expansion started on February 26, 1943 and was completed on July 1 of that year. Training facilities had been neglected because of the shortage of personnel and because requests for improvements had not been approved.

When the OTU Training Detachment arrived at the end of October, the bombing range was in operation with no lighting equipment. One pistol range had been carved out of a gully adjacent to the field and one skeet range was in operation. Firing turrets for ground school work were only in the process of being built. The air base had no right of operation on any air-to-ground gunnery range or air-to-air gunnery range. Classrooms and allied equipment were seriously inadequate. No training charts or publications were available. A group flight control did not exist and radio range facilities were too far from the field to be of any value in inclement weather. The Training Aid Station was non-existent. These conditions ordinarily would have seriously hampered the accomplishment of training. Only the assistance of subordinate officers within the command with keen initiative and imagination made possible a temporary correction of these conditions until additional facilities could be installed.

There were some problems with morale but overall the base administration felt that morale was quite high and that the men, knowing they would soon see war-time action, were "on the beam". There were only two general court-martials at the base up to the end of November 1943. In both cases the defendants were officers. There were no trials in April but in May there had been seven Special Court-Martials under the 61st Article of War, three under the 96th, one under the 65th, and one under the 69th. Since then, the average was only approximately three Special Trials a month.

A serious problem for the base resulted from the lack of recreational facilities offered by McCook. This lack was partially met by a serviceman's Center, which was financed by government appropriations and operated by volunteer townspeople. The Special Services Office

presented a program of nightly events in the Service Club, including two dances a week, a dance class, a bingo night, a quiz night, a "Write Home to Mom" night, and so on.

USO variety shows were also presented. The post theater changed its program several time a week. Football and baseball teams were organized on the base also. According to Army records, there was virtually no problem of disorderliness by soldiers in McCook. Relations between the military and civilians were described as "harmonious."

The GAZETTE cooperated wholeheartedly with the base public relations office and printed a daily column designed to familiarize the local public with the base and its personnel. Many of the townspeople opened their homes to the soldiers and their families, thus lessening the existing housing shortage.

Said Claude A. Addams of the McCook City Council, "When the cities near army camps heard that we were going to have a base here, they wrote in and warned us to increase our police force. We decided to wait and see what would happen. We have not added one policeman to our force."

Early in April, the McCook Air Base was "captured by a numerically stronger force of airborne infantry troops descending on the field with parachutes and gliders." The "attack" on the base was the execution of a tactical maneuver by U.S. military units whose identity and home base were not made known.

A benefit show, the proceeds of which went to a fund for day rooms at the base, drew a packed house at a McCook theater. Performers included soldiers and volunteer townspeople.

A small PX opened on April 12, 1943 with a donated counter and temporary equipment erected by base construction workers. A limited stock of necessity items was purchased.

Until August 1943, when the OTU Training Detachment arrived at the base, the commanding officer of the particular Group was responsible for the training of his men. In August Lt. Col. Sisco assumed that responsibility through the Director of Training appointed by him, Maj. Woodrow W. Lipscomb. However, the buildings were not completed until October. Therefore, The first

Bomb Group here, the 454th Heavy Bombardment Group, trained itself. That Group arrived on August 2 with the first B-24s to land on the base under the command of Lt. Col. Horace D. Aynesworth. Since facilities were not yet complete for the base to train the group, Aynesworth assumed that task. When the Group was transferred from the base on September 30, it had completed first phase and was in its second phase of training.

The 465th Heavy Bombard Group arrived at the base on October 7 and the training of this group was rigidly governed by War Department requirements, the 2nd Air Force, and 16th Bombardment Operational Training Wing policies.

Due to the fact that the last crews received were six days late in beginning their Second Phase training, considerable emphasis was placed on a plan of "production line" system of training. This was designed to bring all crews up to an equal level of training and to regain lost time.

Lack of cooperation between S-3 and S-4 within the Group was a problem and many aircraft were reported available for training that were actually not flyable. Inexperienced operations officers fought this problem admirably and succeeded in maintaining a record reasonably close to schedule. At the end of November the Group was in its second phase. Because the experience level of the combat crews involved was much higher than normally could be expected, proficiency was excellent.

The adoption of a tactical doctrine by the Air Force with a subsequent revision, plus additional directives received from the 16th BOTW, caused considerable discussion and a delay in training. At the same time, a lack of directive-establishing command generally within this training group resulted in lack of coordination among commanders and delayed forward progress. Despite difficulties, not so much as one minor accident interrupted the training program of this group.

Training of the ground echelon proceeded in a normal and satisfactory manner. Initial lack of ground firing ranges impeded progress but the qualifications of the personnel met the minimum requirements of the War Department. The group maintained the best bombing score of any group in the 2nd Air Force."

Much of October was devoted to ground school training and basic flight

training, such as shooting landings and some night flying. About the middle of November, our Group Commander, Col. Rogers, acquired on loan a few B-24J aircraft to aid in this phase of training. These airplanes were later returned to the Army Air Base, Lincoln, Nebraska. During November, the pilots received comprehensive instrument and night flight training. The heavy flight schedule kept the maintenance personnel busy both day and night. They put in long hours keeping the planes in the air. First-phase ground school training was completed on 30 November 1943.

There were eighteen combat crews assigned to the Squadron by the first of December. Lt Russell's crew was later redistributed to provide the replacements for the losses in the remaining seventeen crews which were to go overseas. Enlisted crew number 3-N-299 and crew number 3-N-304 were split among other crews. Lt. Greenwood's crew was all new to the Squadron, with the exception of Sgt Clutts who was on the original Model Crew.

The weather at McCook was bad for flying during December. Some of the crews were sent to Tucson on TDY so they could get more flying time. First-phase flying training was completed on 5 December 1943. Second-phase flying training was impeded by cold weather and difficulty in obtaining parts and supplies to keep the planes in the air. To aid in this phase of training, additional airplanes were obtained on a loan basis.

On 1 January 1944, our Squadron Commander, Capt. Andrus, was pro-moted to the grade of Major.

During January, 1944, training activity was maintained at a high level. Inspections were numerous. High-altitude formation flying was featured and the POM inspection flight demonstrated the Squadron and Group were ready for actual combat duty. The final week of January 1944 was devoted to the issuance of new clothing to enlisted personnel. All equipment was crated, packed, and labeled for overseas shipment, and with completion of final phase training, the Squadron was near the end of its stay at McCook.

Squadron Headquarters and ground personnel assigned to the Squadron prior to 1 November 1943:

Capt. Burton C. Andrus Jr.	1st Lt. Thomas T. Clark Jr.
1st Lt. Charles D. Kimball	1st Lt. Joseph B. Montgomery
1st Lt. John V. Kanaus	1st Lt. Paul J. Smith
2nd Lt. Frederick P. Brooks	2nd Lt. Alan H. Giellerup
2nd Lt. Abraham Mandlovitz	2nd Lt. Richard H. Marsh
2nd Lt. Arthur C. Tennille	2nd LT. Wayne F. Wolfe
2nd Lt. John J. Whirlein	
1st Sgt. James M. Sexton	M/Sgt. Homer T. Green
M/Sgt. Harry R. Riley	M/Sgt. Mack C. Whitaker
M/Sgt. Luther H. Yingling	M/Sgt. Melvin G. Davis
T/Sgt. William P. Ewaski	T/Sgt. Joseph Fleming
T/Sgt. Bradford M. Gordon	T/Sgt. Murdock E. Lennon
T/Sgt. John U. Walker	S/Sgt. Charles L. Cain
T/Sgt. John W. Gosmey	S/Sgt. Millis L. Fleener
S/Sgt. Leonard D. Cluts	S/Sgt. Frank A. Circelli
S/Sgt. Aldur Fargerlund	S/Sgt. Herman T. Feind
S/Sgt. Petro Botch	S/Sgt. Thomas B. Kile
S/Sgt. Arthur W. McDermott	S/Sgt. Angelo P. Gianino
S/Sgt. Harold B. Moore	S/Sgt. Silas E. Snelling
S/Sgt. William C. Tedder	S/Sgt. Willis B. Whitener
Sgt. Harold R. Zoberst	Sgt. Jewell C. Shelnut
Sgt. Henry A. Belval	Sgt. Earl C. Aardal
Sgt. Raymond A. Benson	Sgt. Clarence A. Casanova
Sgt. James T. Christiansen	Sgt. Amien A. Elian
Sgt. Baltazar O. Estrada	Sgt. Archie O. Gadbois
Sgt. Kenneth K. Grapengater	Sgt. Robert W. Hendeen
Sgt. William C. Kelley	Sgt. Kenneth A. Marohn
Sgt. Charles P. Payne	Sgt. Gerald P. Pinten
Sgt. John F. Roberts	Sgt. Lester E. Schwartz

Sgt. Theodore Shpakovsky	Sgt. Dennis L. Spencer
Sgt. Martin P. Stemler	Sgt. William J. Wightman
Sgt. Rex Yeadon	Cpl. Edmon A. Ayers
Cpl. Frank Harder	Cpl. Steve J. Paschke
Cpl. William M. Mawyer	Cpl. William J. Peters
Cpl. Herbert L. Wilkes	Cpl. Leo A. Wozniak
Cpl. Albert Young	Pfc. Mario A. DiGregorio Jr.
Pfc. Alexander J. Borris	Pfc. Russell Aughinbaugh
Pfc. Robert F. Lavalleur	Pfc. Buffin L. LeJeune
Pfc. Michael Magoch	Pfc. Dominic A. Maulucci
Pfc. Joseph E. Natoli	Pfc. Roy W. Talvensaari
Pfc. Andy C. Wilhelm	Pvt. James B. Clinton
Pvt. James P. Gossett	Pvt. Walter B. Parker
Pvt. William D. Rose	Pvt. William R. Wade

By the first of November, assigned personnel were getting promotions and additional personnel were arriving. On Special Orders Number 13, dated 1 November 1943, Headquarters 465th Bomb Group (H) AAF, Army Air Base, McCook, Nebraska, the following personnel were promoted to the grades indicated:

Promoted To Master Sergeant

T/Sgt. John U. Walker Jr.

Promoted To Staff Sergeant

Sgt. William C. Kelley	Sgt. Charles P. Payne
Sgt. William J. Peters	Sgt. William J. Wightman

Promoted To Sergeant

Cpl. Mario A. DiGregorio	Cpl. Buffin L. LeJune
Cpl. Michael Magoth	Cpl. William M. Mawyer

Promoted To Corporal

Pfc. Edgar L. Fergerson	Pfc. Russell W. Aughinbaugh
Pfc. Richard J. Tewes	Pfc. Richard J. Marquard
Pfc. Roy W. Talvensari	Pvt. Mervin L. Mawyer

New Personnel assigned to the 783rd on Special Orders Number 13 dated 1 November were:

Pfc. Alferd F. White
Pfc. Walter J. Tatarow
Pvt. Andrew J. Fishbach
Pfc. Gilbert F. Theiler
Sgt. John Domyancich
Pvt. Roy G. Lowery
Cpl. Henry L. Clifton
Pfc. Lea Parrett Jr.
Cpl. Thomas F. Howerton
Sgt. Raymond V. Husak
Pfc. John Slaughter
Cpl. Charles Stone
Cpl. Charles C. Marshall
Pfc. Joseph F. O'Rilley
Pfc. Ralph E. Stanton
Sgt. Raymond A. Boisvert
Pfc. Dallas R. Rice
Pvt. Louis J. DI Vincenzo

Pfc. Wilford D. Davis
Pfc. Willard C. Milz
Pfc. Richard K. Rogers
Pfc. William C. Ware
Pfc. Jack T. Hickerson
Cpl. Albano Ribeiro
Pfc. Michael J. Vacca
Cpl. James L. Day
Cpl. Charles E. Korner
Pfc. Raymond Murphy
Cpl. Raymond Allen
Pfc. Carl H. Obenshine
Cpl. Vincent G. Foley
Pfc. Flavins W. Adkins
Sgt. Arnold B. Cox
Sgt. Anthony S. Constantine
Sgt. Billy R. Conner

ORIGINAL FLIGHT CREWS

The following is a list of the original seventeen flight crews and the aircraft each crew flew from McCook to Pantanella Air Base, Italy.

B-24H	42-52419 "Duration Plus"	P– Leroy N. Brown Cp– Arthur B. Adams N– Julius N. Bauer B– William C. Powell E– Victor Cohen R– Robert C. Head G– Colman Gumm G– Oliver E. Fredrickson G– Milton E. Roush G– William J. Beerman
B-24H	42-52539 "Southern Gal"	P– Milton H. Duckworth Cp– John L. Allen N– Henry Kardas B– Robert M. Hockman E– James T. Sullivan R– William D. Stroud G– Robert L. Lewis G– Thomas P. Sullivan G– Leonard M. Huastes G– Leory J. Crenshaw
B-24H	42-52589 "Moby Dick"	P– William L Vorhies Cp– Owen N. Livesay N– Daniel J. Ryan B– Edward A. Groh E– Hubert P. Johnson R– Merton T. Pitman G– Charles G. Yokitis G– George J. Payne G– John J. Luce G– Homer L. Ward

B-24H	41-29424 "Sans Souci"	P– Charles S. Ellis Cp– Louis S. Kranzley N– Richard E. Higgins B– James B. Steen G– Vernon D. Edwards R– Arthur P. Haile G– Henry E. Walker G– Samuel A. McGill G– William H. Weir G– Joseph R. Gifford
B-24H	42-52473 "Pith & Moan"	P– James R. Allen Cp– John R. Stewart N– Clayton L. Vandyke B– Daniel S. Bolinski E– Charles R. Dixon R– Salvatore Cintola G– John P. Wachter G– Fommie Thompson G– Jack Tayler G– Joseph E. Conte
B-24H	42-29377 "Umbriaggo"	P– Wilbert Elliott Cp– Paul A. Tarantino N– James L. Connell B– John G. Zitis E– Alvin M. Murphy R– Robert J. Griffin G– Earl R. Cutler G– Gilbert D. Kapp G– Robert L. Valentine G– Jack Bernstein
B-24H	42-28761 "Perry & the Pirates"	P– Norman A. Perry Cp– Fay C. Bailey N– Howard M. Brown B– Claude V. Jacobs E– Inman D. Stewart R– Charles F. Downs, Jr. G– Ray Evers, Jr. G– Robert G. Reason G– Jefferson K. Carpenter G– William P. Martin

B-24H	42-52585 "Section Eight"	P- Orville J. Heim Cp- Carl W. Lundberg N- E. Burke Huber B- William P. Sheridan E- Floyd E. Gregory R- Jack A. Walters G- James L. Cady G- Edward M. Reagan G- Richard H. Trimingham G- Weyland B. Feely
B-24H	42-52478 "TS"	P- William A. Nelson Cp- Ralph L. Pilegard N- James P. Heron B- John F. Barnaby E- Durward E. Heubner R- Frederick J. Robinson G- Kenneth O. Monge G- Rome L. Barker G- Bernard A. Wilson G- Jesse L. Henderson
B-24H	41-29360 "Table Stuff"	P- Floyd V. Coffield Cp- Alexius D. Reid N- Russel C. Christianson B- Woodrow W. Browning # E- Melvin G. Davis R- Martin P. Stemler G- William J. Weightman * G- Lewis L. Stanart G- Charles C. Carson G- Clarence R. O'Brien
B-24H	41-28736 "Shack Queen"	P- Thomas W. Bonds Cp- Guy M. Carter Jr. N- Joseph B. Montgomery B- Ralph J. Rinard E- Carl S. Adair R- Jack Albertson G- Lloyd F. Dunton G- Melvin J. Radebaugh G- Harry G. Reifsnyder

G– Thomas L. Bracey

B–24H	42–52541 "DNIF"	P– Robert P. Swanzy Cp– Robert W. Crabtree N– Robert B. Thomas B– Ralph J. Smith E– Paul H. Hooge R– Wilber R. Vaughan G– Lupe Montana G– Walter P. Wilson G– Thomas W. Walsh G– Charles A. Cripps
B–24H	42–52403 "Nobody's Baby"	P– Cecil R. Bates Cp– Weiser W. Wilson N– Charles J. Conlin B– Nyme Farage E– Joe Tayler R– Carl H. Main G– John J. Wilby G– Grover J. Weber, Jr. G– Albert J. Yatkauskas G– Alexander S. Baronoski
B–24H	41–29403	P– Jesse T. Jumper Cp– Royce L. Ward N– Ivan J. Kubanis B– James D. Mullins E– Edward J. Trauth R– Frank C. Sedlak G– Harold Nashalsky G– Anthony J. Delucca G– Dwight G. Perkins G– Eugene Kulczyk

B-24H	P- Stanley C. Pace Cp- Charles Shelor N- Joseph N. Coote B- William B. Teller E- Dennis A. Holland R- Henry S. Bruscinski G- Cleo J. Jackson G- Samuel J. Strahan G- Edward Robinson G- Steve Schultz
"Rough and Ready"	P- Frank J. Kara Cp- Robert F. Haefner N- George T. Oviatt B- Cecil C. Choate E- Gerald W. Howard R- Paul E. Scheibel G- Roy A. Austin G- John W. Hatfield G- Whittmore A. Yates G- Robert B. Weeks
	P- Thomas W. Greenwood Cp- Francis A. Goplen N- William N. Bitterman B- E. Sam Marie E- Leonard D. Clutts R- James McCloskey G- William Douglas G- Charles Griesing G- William D. Sams G- Ernest Dunnagan

Melvin G. Davis was a member of the crew that flew the first B-50 aircraft around the world nonstop.

* S/Sgt Lewis L. Stanart flew over to Pantanella, Italy on Lt. Coffield's crew (Model Crew) in place of Sgt. Kelley and was then assigned to Lt Allen's crew. S/Sgt. William C. Kelley, returned to Coffield's crew.



CHAPTER II

FROM McCOOK TO PANTANELLA

On 5 February 1944, the ground echelon and two combat crews, plus other flight crew members who were replaced by key Squadron personnel on the airplanes, boarded a train at McCook, Nebraska — their destination the staging area at Topeka, Kansas. They arrived there on 6 February 1944 and stayed a few days during which time they completed final processing, physical examinations, and clothing and equipment checks.

The Squadron was given Shipment No. 0622-M (Flying Echelon 0622-PZ) for shipment to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. After a short stay they were then sent to the Port of Embarkation, Newport News, Virginia, for the trip across the Atlantic Ocean. The 783rd personnel, except the fifteen flight crews, were assigned to Liberty ship "Walter Ranger" for the trip to Oran, Algeria.

The Walter Ranger departed from Newport News on 15 February 1944, joining the convoy of some eighty odd vessels for final departure the following day. It took thirty-three days to zigzag across to Oran. For most of the personnel this was their maiden ocean voyage, and with rough weather being encountered, seasickness was quite prevalent. The journey overseas was not entirely uneventful, one vessel was torpedoed near Bizerte, Tunisia, and another struck a mine in the same area. The torpedoed ship sank shortly after being struck, but the other was able to make port.

After a lengthy stay in Oran, sleeping in tents near the edge of the desert, the 783rd personnel boarded the "SS Lyons" for the trip to Naples, Italy.

≡ Albert Lewis's Diary

"Yesterday we were marched aboard the USS Lyon, a navy troop transport and this evening we are leaving "La Port d'Oran." At present one can barely discern it in the hazy distance. I wonder if I will ever again set foot on African soil. Of the three weeks and a half that we spent there, I can truthfully say that I didn't have one dull moment.

Our camp was about 17 or 18 kilometers southeast of Oran — a matter of 10 or 12 miles. The little town of Fleures was very near the camp. Other small nearby towns were La Grande, St. Cloud and St. Louis. I visited Oran a couple of times and also the smaller towns. I must admit that I was a little disappointed in Oran. It looked like a modern, prosperous city from the harbor. Not that the looks were deceiving — just exasperating. In the city there seemed to be no pattern for the streets. Mostly rather narrow, they seemed to have been deliberately conceived and definitely placed to confuse a stranger. But to a native they must have seemed simple enough because the few natively driven vehicles would run helter-skelter up and down the streets at a frightening pace, most of the pedestrian traffic insisted on walking in the road and it was surprising how few accidents there were!

There were a few places open only to servicemen of the Allied countries. But most places such as stores, bars and restaurants were open to anyone. One of the places restricted to American troops only, sold "American formula beer. A typically American name hung over the door — "Joe's Joint" was a "mecca" for U.S. troops even though the beer was served in "tumblers" of tin. Glassware being exceedingly scarce, tin cans with lids removed were used as beer mugs. Incidentally, the Red Cross even served coffee in tin can cups!

My biggest kick was talking — or that is, trying to talk, to the natives. Although I had two years of French in high school, it took considerable pointing and sign language to supplement the meager phrases I could muster from memory. I did a little better in the smaller towns. I feel that if I could have lived among the natives a couple of weeks I could have made them understand with little or no pointing!

The big industry of this section of Africa seems to be wine. There are thousands of acres of vineyards outside of Oran. In fact our camp was surrounded by them. And there are wineries everywhere. The mines are excellent and I believe they would offer California stiff competition if they had the same market. Out on the

farms the people drink the sour white wine as we drink water. A few of us boys went on pass to St. Cloud one afternoon and bought a meal at a native home. The food was good and with it we were served two quarts of wine!"

After a long delay at the Naples port, the personnel were transferred to an old university building where they lived for a few days, sleeping on the marble floors with only a blanket under them. They were then loaded in old railroad cattle cars for the trip to Pantanella, Italy, where the Group Airfield was located. There was neither food nor water on the train for the men. However, the train stopped about every twenty or thirty minutes along the way. The stops brought out the Yankee ingenuity in the men. At one stop near a U.S. Army Depot some of the men created a diversion for the Army guards while others made a raid on the canned food stored. At other stops the troops scrounged any food or water they could find. There were approximately 350 men crammed in the cattle cars for the two day trip to Pantanella where they arrived in late April 1944. The first job for these men was to set up all the tents, messhall, and burn the hay out of the flight briefing room which was located in an old barn. They also helped to lay the steel matting that formed the runway and parking ramps for the B-24s.

After much hustling, packing and shipping foot lockers home, the flying echelon (less the two crews that had accompanied the ground echelon) left the air base at McCook on 5 February 1944 for the staging area, at Lincoln, Nebraska. Before takeoff, many of the crews christened their new airplanes with champagne, gin, and/or other spirits.

At Lincoln, the crews were processed, clothing checked, and new equipment issued; the planes were given hundred-hour inspections and some had minor modifications made. The crews left Lincoln on 13 February 1944 for Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida. Many of the planes made low-level passes over Omaha, Nebraska, where the flight crew's had spent some of their spare time during the stay at McCook.

The crews spent two or three days at Morrison. They spent this time getting last-minute lectures, doing some processing, and making wills and allotments or last-minute changes in the many papers filled out prior to overseas departure. Also final checks were made on the airplanes and clothing, mainly flying gear. The crews were given briefings for the next legs of the trip — to Trinidad and then Belem, Fortaleza, and Natal, Brazil. The navigators were issued a complete set of maps for the trip to Brazil. Each of the crews filed a flight plan for Waller Field, Trinidad, which was the first stop. The crews left Morrison Field for Waller Field on 16 February 1944. Takeoff time started at about 0330 hours local time, which gave the navigators a couple of hours for celestial work in preparation for the long flight over the Atlantic. Some crews made a stop at San Juan, Puerto Rico, to get additional fuel and a few cases of Puerto Rican rum. The crews spent one night at Waller Field, and for most that was plenty of time. The mosquitoes were thick and the fellows started taking atabrine pills to prevent malaria, and they disinfected the planes with aerosol bombs to control insects.

The next stop on the trip was Belem, Brazil. The crews started the takeoffs from Waller Field on the morning of 17 February 1944 and arrived at Belem in the afternoon after flying over jungle and some expanse of water along the coastline. The field at Belem was used extensively and the sleeping quarters were comfortable. On 18 February 1944, the crews left Belem for Fortaleza and Natal, Brazil, a flight that was also primarily over water and jungle.

After the crews had rested overnight, they began the flight across the Atlantic to Dakar, Africa and all made the ocean crossing without any trouble. After an overnight stay in Dakar, the crews filed their flight plans for Marrakech, Morocco. On this flight some of the planes were forced to land at Tindouf, Algeria, because of the weather. This was an emergency landing field on the edge of the Sahara Desert with no overnight accommodations. Some of the crews had to spend several days and nights there sleeping in the planes. The wind blew all of the time and the nights were cold. The crews were glad when the weather cleared so they could continue the flight to Marrakech. After a short stay in Marrakech, they continued to Oudna Air Base, North Africa. Lt. Swanzy and his crew were the first of the 783rd to arrived at Oudna, on 23 February 1944.

The stay at Oudna was to last for some two months. The base at Pantanella, Italy was not completed and the flight crews settled in for the long stay at Oudna. They set up tents, but the weather was so cold that some method of heating had to be devised. Each group engineered their own heating system, in most cases by cutting a steel barrel in half or any other metal container that could be found and connecting a copper tube from a can of gasoline (outside the tent) to the "stove". There were many small explosions each day because of the gasoline coming in contact with the hot gravel in the makeshift stoves. There were also some very large explosions where some of the fellows were seriously burned.

On 28 February 1944, Lt Swanzy ferried his plane, No. 42-52541, DNIF, to the 376th Group at Manduria, Italy. The crew returned to Oudna on 1 March. On 10 March 1944, the Squadron drew numbers to see which plane Lt. Swanzy would get to replace DNIF. He drew Lt. Bates' plane No. 42-52403.

On 11 March, the 465th participated with another group in a practice mission. Lts. Murphy and Melody, from another squadron, with a total of seventeen men aboard collided and burned in midair. While circling the field at about 500 feet, picking up the formation, Lt. Murphy's plane slid over and his right wing damaged Maj. Smith's left rudder. Apparently, Lt. Murphy immediately cut the throttles, which resulted in Lt. Melody's plane ramming Lt. Murphy's plane in the rear. Both planes caught fire and seemed to explode in midair. The largest piece of wreckage found was a section of the nose and part of the nose turret of Lt. Melody's plane. A search party was organized in the afternoon and fifteen bodies were found. Most of them were hardly recognizable. The local Arabs got to the the crash site first and took everything of value from the bodies. This was the first serious accident experienced by the 465th Group.

Most of the next few weeks were spent flying practice formations and getting more ground training including practicing emergency exits and simulated bailouts. The ground crews were over at Oran during this time and the flight crews were required to guard and maintain the planes as well as fly the practice missions. This was a difficult time for all the crews, there was very little transportation available to them, so they acquired transportation any way possible. Some of the crews visited the Replace-ment Depot and "requisitioned" some motorcycles (while the guard was taken to another area of the depot) to bring back to Oudna. Much of the transportation the fellows used was built from wrecked German vehicles or "acquired" from other American units in the area.

On 20 March 1944, Maj. Andrus went to Italy to check on the progress of construction at Pantanella. The squadron continued to fly practice missions and drop practice bombs. Maj. Andrus returned from Pantanella on 26 March and reported the living conditions would be better there than at Oudna. By 29 March 1944, there were three groups at Oudna: the 464th, 465th, and 485th.

On 30 March 1944, Maj. Andrus assigned a few men to design a squadron insignia. Frank Kara was on this committee and he designed the Squadron Escutcheon.

On 1 April 1944, it was learned from the troops in Oran that M/Sgt. Homer T. (Pop) Green had died. On his way back to camp, after a night at the French Foreign Legion where he had a few drinks, he fell off a cliff and broke his neck. Pop was one of the key maintenance personnel for the 783rd and had done an excellent job keeping the planes ready for flying.

On 3 April 1944, several planes were dispatched to Oran to pick up the flight crews who

had come over by boat and some of the ground crew personnel to assist in the maintenance of the planes. On 12 April 1944, the 464th and 465th flew a two-group practice mission. The 464th Group lost a plane in the formation; it apparently disintegrated in midair. Seven chutes were counted by Sgts. Hooge and Wilson of Lt. Swanzy's crew. The tail section came loose first, the plane went into a spin, the wing came loose, and the plane struck the water with an enormous splash. One chute came down for a long way, then after a long, tense wait, it blossomed. Lt. Duckworth circled the scene for two hours and dropped two life rafts.

The 783rd continued to increase its number of vehicles. By 11 April, there was a small German tank operating, several English and German motorcycles, a German jeep, and at least three Harley-Davidson motor-cycles. Some of these vehicles were bought, some assembled from parts found around the area, and some "acquired" by other means.

By 18 April, plans were under way to go to the new base at Pantanella. Lt. Bonds won the honor of being the first in formation to land at the new base. He won this privilege by points determined by personal inspections, missions accomplished, and airplane inspections by the commanders.

On 20 April 1944, the 783rd Squadron left Oudna for Pantanella. Here is the account of the trip as recorded by Lt. Robert Thomas, the navigator on Lt. Swanzy's crew:

█ "I am writing this while climbing to 10,000 feet. We are between Zembra Isle and the Island of Favignana off the coast of Sicily. We have about 40 ships in this formation, and all heavily loaded. It's a beautiful sight this morning, it's 1040 local time, and the sun is shining brightly on layers of scattered clouds. Tunis bay was almost completely overcast with a rolling layer of cumulus clouds at about 1500 feet. My altimeter reads 8000 now; we are climbing slowly at an indicated speed of 170 mph. The gunners are all at their guns, all ready to go. Smitty and I are in the nose, I couldn't get any music so we turned the radio off and are watching the formation. There were a few sunken boats in the bay of Tunis, they looked rather sinister with just the masts and stacks sticking out above the water; the whole outline of the boats is visible from the air. The sea is rather calm today, there are solid layers of cloud over the islands, they look like a blanket that has been placed there to protect them through the night. I have the heater tube in my hands now to warm them, the temperature is -2°C at 9000 feet; the heat feels good. These heaters are peculiar, they give abundance of heat at low altitudes, but hardly function at 20,000. We just turned to our next heading over the Island of Favignana, my ETA was okay. It is a comparatively flat island under full cultivation. The fields are plainly visible, also roads and masonry fences. It has a few low hills at its northeastern side. We are out over the sea again, 185 miles from Licosa point of Italy. From there we take a direct course to our field at Pantanella. Sicily is on my right, very close, many of its mountains are also covered with a layer of clouds this morning. Sicily is a rather mountainous island,

Mt. Etna is its highest peak, about eleven thousand feet high.

Palermo is a little too far away to be visible, but we are directly "abeam" of it now, on a true course of 40 from Favignana. We are beginning to fly over scattered clouds about 300 feet below us, from all indications, I expect Italy to be almost completely covered with them. The temperature has dropped to exactly 0°C. We are at 10,000 feet, indicating 170 mph. It is a very pretty sight out here in the center of nothing, clouds below, a blue sea visible below them, and high above wispy streaks of cirrus clouds.

Our group is flying a nice steady formation, and would present a formidable opponent in case we should be attacked by any of our enemies. We are about five miles to the left of a small island, it isn't on the map. The time is 1110; we are 20 minutes out of Favignana at an indicated air speed of 164 knots on a true course of 40.

Our ship weighs about 59,000 pounds this morning, and I have been wondering how long it would take us to leave it if it started to disintegrate as the ship from the other group I mentioned previously in my diary did.

Lt. Crabtree just called me over the interphone and asked if I cared for some orange juice; I declined because I just ate a chocolate bar from one of our K rations.

We landed at our field; the wheels of our ship touched the runway at 1044 G.M.T., 20 April 1944. That is 1244 local time. It is a very beautiful setting here, a nice place. Our tent is about two miles from the ship and up on a nice hill. The field is in a flat valley, and the runway is steel. It really makes a racket when you land on it. Incidentally, this day seems to be Hitler's birthday. We happened to pick up a German station, and they interrupted their program to make the announcement. It was broadcast in English, the announcer said the Führer still had great plans for the Third Reich, and that the Americans weren't accomplishing very much. It was a real propaganda program."

PANTANELLA AIR FIELD **NEAR CANOSA, ITALY**

The following information on Pantanella was taken from 783rd Bombardment Squadron (H) 40th Reunion Booklet held at the U.S.A.F Academy, Colorado 23 to 26 September, 1983.

≡ Burt Andrus

"The battlefield of Cannae was just off the end of our runway. Little could Han-

nibal have known, as he faced and soon annihilated Consul Gaius Varro in what would go down in history as one of the twenty decisive battles of the world in 216 BC, that one day the Ofanto River valley would be the base from which another decisive battle (the Battle of Ploesti) would be launched. We moved our pyramidal tents into the olive groves atop two hills overlooking our runway, and the vineyards flanking the Ofanto had to give way to the hardstand and maintenance shacks. With the same verve which prompted the Pilgrims to erect a church as a first order of business, we built an Officers' club which would become a model for the other Squadrons to copy.

The tufa block quarries nearby, which had been providing building materials for centuries, suddenly found a demand which the quarries, using the ancient stone axes, could not meet. Imagine their astonishment when a *Yankee* showed up with a blade (made

from a piece of armor plate) mounted on and powered by a motorcycle engine which cut more blocks in an hour than the conventional system could produce in a week.

Remember the sound of the heavy guns at the front — the powdered eggs and spam — the "Itie" workmen who could not be bribed into working through the siesta period — the homemade stoves catching on fire — the long lines at "Mail Call" — the abuse Sgt. Walker had to take when he woke up the crews at 0230 hours — the VD lectures — the stand downs — the parties — the trips to Capri?

Note: I took a "Sentimental Journey" to Pantanella during my teaching assignment in Germany in May '82. You will be happy to know that there is absolutely no sign of the war. The valley is fully restored to its original state — olive groves and vineyards flourish."



CHAPTER III

OUR EARLY COMBAT MISSIONS

With the approach of May Day, 1944, there was but one thought in the minds of all members of the Squadron — when would the Squadron become operative; when would it actually become a combat organization? Our hopes were raised on 2 May 1944, when Sgt. Rose started awakening the crews at 0330 stating there was a mission scheduled. The briefing was scheduled at 0440; when everyone was assembled, Col. Clark came in to announce the Group had been scratched from the wing mission and would fly a practice mission instead. This announcement was a disappointment for the crews scheduled to fly the mission.

On 5 May 1944, the announcement was made that our first combat mission was on. This marked a milestone in our military careers. The crews were well trained and as fit as humanly possible. The target was a German Army Headquarters at Podgorica, Yugoslavia. There were a large number of German military personnel stationed there, and according to ground reports, 500 Germans were killed during this mission. The photographs showed 85 percent of the bombs were in the target area. Each plane carried ten 500-pound bombs, and designated planes dropped tinfoil from the I.P. (initial point of the bomb run) to the target to foil radar. Each of the planes carried 4200 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition. The mission proved so successful Gen. Twining, Commander, 15th Air Force, issued these words of commendation: "It was the finest freshman mission ever flown in the 15th Air Force."

The second mission for the 783rd was flown on 6 May 1944. The target was the marshalling yards at Craiova, Rumania. There were no casualties, no planes were lost, and this too was a very effective mission. No flak was encountered, but the P-47 fighter escort for the group did shoot down one ME-110. There were about 30 American fighters providing the escort for the mission.

On the third mission, no bombs were dropped because of cloud cover at the target. The fourth mission was to Parma, Italy, but it too was covered with clouds and the bombs were brought back to the base. The fifth mission, flown on 13 May, was also to Parma. The target area was clear and the bomb drop was very successful. The target was almost entirely destroyed. Each plane carried eight 500-pound general purpose bombs.

Missions six and seven were to northern Italy. There were no casualties, but Lt. Duckworth did get two fifty-caliber bullets through his windshield from one of the planes ahead of him, and the extreme cold air in the cockpit made flying very difficult.

Mission number eight was to Ploesti on 18 May, and here the flak was very intense and accurate, and most of the planes had a lot of holes in them, some as large as four to five inches in diameter. Lt. Coffield lost an engine because of flak. Several men were injured. T/Sgt. Edward J. Trauth on Lt. Jumper's crew had an artery cut in his leg. His clothes were cut away to stop the bleeding and as a result of this his leg was frozen during the flight back to the base. He was transferred to the General Hospital in Bari, Italy, where his leg was amputated just below the knee on 20 May, 1944. Sgt. Trauth was the first man from the 783rd seriously wounded in combat.

The Model Crew

■ Floyd Coffield

"We flew our first mission May 6. Just a milk run. Nothing to it.

It wasn't till May 18 that we learned what combat was all about. The target was the Polesti oil fields. After briefing and while on the hard stand I realized how nervous the crew were. In an effort to calm them down I told them I didn't think it would be too bad. We were flying near the end of the 15th Air Force and by the time we hit the target they would probably have shot up all their ammunition.

When we reached the I. P. and looked down Flak Alley I knew I was wrong. Man was it black! 720 guns of 88 MM or larger and all of them shooting to kill.

Flak has different stages. You see it. You hear it. You hear the shrapnel hitting your plane. If it doesn't get any worse than that you are lucky. Also that damned flak has taught more airmen to pray than any chaplain ever hoped to.

On the bomb run I got a call from the waist that we had a fire in #3 engine with flames going past the tail. We feathered the engine, cut off the fuel, and hit the CO₂. This must have been the right procedure as the fire went out.

I am not sure if we were hit before or after "bombs away," but at one time I glanced over at Dwight Reid and I could barely see him. He had pushed himself so far back into that "Iron Coffin" he was hardly visible.

After leaving the target area we had 3 fans turning and were holding our place in formation. Nothing to worry about unless we lost another engine. But luck was with us and we returned with the Group.

Of all the missions we flew we had many rough ones, but this first Polesti raid was the roughest.

The following members of the model crew finished 50 missions: Coffield, Reid, Davis, Kelly, O'Brien, Carson, and Stemler. Russell Christenson went down with Tom Clark. It was his 50th mission; he was taken prisoner. Woody Browning went down with The Bates crew; he was taken prisoner. William Weightman was behind in missions because of an appendix operation. I am not sure if he finished".

The 783rd lost no people or planes on the next seven missions. Mission number sixteen was to Atzgersdorf, Austria, on 29 May, and the 783rd lost its first crew in combat. Lt. Vorhies' plane took two direct flak hits over the target. One chute came out immediately and one was hung up in the bomb bay. Lt. Vorhies held the plane in formation for about two minutes. He "salvoed" his bombs and then the plane went into a slow spiral to the left. The second attack unit saw seven chutes. Lt. Ryan, Sgt. Payne, and Sgt. Luce were killed during this mission. The flak was very intense and accurate, causing severe damage to many planes. Several planes had their hydraulic system shot out. Lt. Kara's crew got credit for shooting down a German fighter. Each plane carried sixteen 250-pound bombs, approximately one-fourth landed in the target area; the rest scattered all over. (Reference, Lt. Bob Thomas's, Lt. Kara's, and Sgt. Roush's diaries)

On 31 May, the 783rd flew its second mission to Ploesti. Again the Squadron was very lucky in that there were no planes lost or serious casualties. The Group lost two planes to

flak and one to fighters. The Germans had the entire target area covered with smoke so the results of the mission were uncertain. Later photos showed a pumping station and some storage tanks destroyed.

After the first combat mission on 5 May, the Group and Squadron flew eighteen more missions in the twenty-six remaining days of the month, nine of these during the final ten days of the month, a tribute indeed to the skill and stamina of the combat crew personnel. Many commendatory messages were received during this period from higher commanders as a result of the fine bombing record being compiled by the Group in its initial month of combat. As a matter of interest, the Group flew a total of fifteen combat missions without the loss of a single airplane and with injury to only two of its personnel.

During the month of May, work continued in the building of the area. Construction of the Officers' Mess building got under way in earnest. The foundation for the Enlisted Men's Day Room was laid and it was hoped that these two structures would be completed in a very short time.

Transportation Section

■ Charles Payne

"The Transportation Section did their part in these projects by hauling the supplies and assisting in the scrapping of the materials needed to complete the buildings. The Section consisted of the following men:

Charles P. Payne
Guy R. Oldfield
Herbert L. Wilkes
James V. Leggett
Dan Hull Jr.
N. W. Van Assche
Leonard E. Burris
William F. Rice
George W. Maddox
Harold R. Harlos
R. A. Cortez
Gerald H. Crowe
John J. Gomesky
John L. Plarr

This was a hard working group who had little time for rest and recreation. Charles Payne tried to give the fellows one day off each week, but this was not always possible. He also kept a schedule so each man knew where he was supposed to go each day:

Day Off		Driver to Minervino
	Name	Name
Monday	Gomosky	Harlos
Tuesday	Harlos	Hull
Wednesday	Rice & Burris	Van Assche
Thursday	Cortez	Rice
Friday	Van Assche	Gomesky
Saturday	Maddox	
Sunday	Hull	

The Squadron had eight 2 1/2 ton (6X6) GMC trucks which these guys drove to transport the troops etc. :

Serial Number	Driver
4207055.....	Rice
4279231.....	Gomosky
4281555.....	Martinrz/Harlos
4224566.....	Hull
488247.....	Van Assche ("Jitterbug" painted on Wheels)
4284845.....	Hopgood
4189722.....	Madd
4211954.....	Assigned to Engineering

Two 1 1/2 ton trucks:

395763 (GMC)..... Burris
 3307783 (Dodge Personnel Carrier) Plarr

One 3/4 ton Dodge Command Car.

20293424.....Cortez

Three 3/4 ton weapon carriers and their assignments:

254748.....	Armament
263138.....	Tech Supply
271958.....	Communications

We went through a "few" Jeeps, but, this is a list of some numbers and their assignments:

31146175.....	Orderly Room
2032202.....	Personnel Supply
20472508.....	Engineering
20606542.....	Major Warnack
20611916.....	Major Swartz
20611650.....	Capt. Rothwell, Engineering
202 43401.....	Ordnance

We had one ambulance assigned to Doc. Kimball's medics.

Our problem was the location of the 783rd. It was so far away from the briefing room, we had to take the crews both ways. All the other Squadrons were close and the crews could walk to the briefings. It was always a problem keeping the trucks running with the rough roads to run on. Every time they hit a large hole it would break the frame around the radiator and the truck would be out of commission. Some of the guys were pretty rough and they knew they had time off if they had no truck to drive".

There were no planes lost or men wounded during the first five missions in June. On 9 June, the target was the Allach Motor Works just northwest of Munich. The account of this mission as recorded by Lt. Bob Thomas:

■ "We got up over the Alps without incident, saw a few fighters crossing northern Italy. The wing was attacked by about twenty enemy fighters. They came in so fast that it was impossible to get an accurate count. They hit us immediately after crossing the Alps. They were probably from Munich. That is a very important military city and is well defended in many ways. I did not see our escort after we crossed the Alps and the fighters were like bees near the target . I saw five ships shot down in as many minutes. They were from the 485th Group. Most of them were straggling a little and one or two tried to help the others and in turn were shot down. It was a terrible sight to see them getting it. They are so helpless as far as maneuvering. One exploded right under our left wing and was a horrible thing to see. Two chutes came out an instant before the explosion and

they caught fire and burned as they opened. Another ship executed a complete loop, out of control, the pilot was probably dead at the stick. An average of about three chutes came out of each plane. We were going to drop on our pathfinder today because the target was completely covered with clouds. The undercast was at about 15,000 feet and we were a little over 23,000. Major Andrus would not take the navigators correction, so we let them go right over the city. We only had one casualty after all the flak and fighters we went through today, and the flak was really something to see. It was about thirty-five miles long and five to fifteen wide and very thick. Our casualty was Lt. Greenwood, his brake line was shot out and gave out on application of the brakes in landing. He couldn't stop and went about two hundred feet past the runway. The nose wheel was washed out and the nose damaged. They are going to use the ship for salvage, which doesn't make Tommy feel so good.

The 464th has been nonoperational because of their high losses. They were to practice formation for three days and then fly combat again, but on 8 June they lost two ships here on the field — one blew a tire and ground looped quite violently, the other ran off the runway and burned. The crews got out of both planes quite shaken and with some scratches."

In early June 1944, the Officers' Club and Mess building was completed and formally opened. This was an occasion for a real celebration, an excellent orchestra from the 456th Bombardment Group being engaged. Invitations to attend were extended throughout the Group and a large number of visitors honored the Squadron officers by being present. The club was lighted by three 25 watt and two 100 watt light bulbs according to Sgt. Dick Rogers' diary. The electrical generator was obtained from the supply depot at Bari, Italy, just before the club was completed.

The Enlisted Men's Day Room continued to progress satisfactorily. Work was rushed on this building and about 10 June 1944 it was sufficiently completed to permit a "preview" in the form of an old-fashioned "beer bust," together with a surprise "jam" session by members of the 456th Bombardment Group Orchestra, who came over from the Officers' Club where they had been furnishing the music for the initial officers' dance, made possible by the graciousness of Army nurses from the nearby 4th Field Hospital and the 26th General Hospital at Bari, Italy.

Continued attention was paid during the month to sanitation, particularly to minimize dangers of dysentery during the summer months. Sam Marie was put in charge of this project. Construction of screens for all mess building doors and windows, as well as further improving all latrine facilities, met with favor by the various inspectors from higher head-quarters who visited the area.

Necessary precautions were taken to minimize the possibilities of malaria, so prevalent in

that section of Italy during the summer months. Mosquito "bars" were installed in all tents, atabrine tablets issued at all evening meals, and extra precautions taken to provide the highest degree of sanitation throughout the area. Showers were installed, no small achievement of itself under the conditions.

To add to the fine morale of the personnel, during the month of June there was an unusually large number of promotions, especially in the enlisted grades where the Squadron was rapidly attaining its authorized strength. Another morale builder was the visit, after each mission, of the Red Cross Clubmobile girls with their mobile unit dispensing coffee, lemonade, and doughnuts. These visits always received the unanimous approval of all personnel.

Missions twenty-five through thirty-four were fairly easy, with no loss in personnel or planes. On mission number thirty, flown on 22 June, Lt. Kara's crew shot down their second German fighter plane. On mission number thirty-five, 30 June, Sgt. Roush gives us this account of the mission:

■ "Supposed to hit the marshalling yards in Blechhammer, Germany. The weather front kept us from going beyond Vienna. We were lost in the clouds for fifteen minutes. A B-24 nearly crashed into us in the clouds. Also FW-190's almost got us. The fighters got two planes — seven chutes were seen leaving one of the planes."

The 783rd Squadron lost its second crew and plane in combat. Lt. Robertson and his crew were shot down after losing the Group in the clouds. Three of the men were killed — they were Lt. William Downey, S/Sgt. Joseph Scherger, and Sgt. Willard Crary. Four of the crew were captured and taken to a POW camp. Lt. Robinson and Lt. Rogers escaped and made it back to Pantanella. They went down in "Shack Queen". Lt. Robinson's crew was the first replacement crew to be shot down.

As a reward for the excellent performance of the Squadron, rest camp leaves and furloughs were given to the Isle of Capri, Villago Mancuso (a beautiful mountain resort in southern Italy), and San Spirito (a seaside resort near Bari, Italy, on the Adriatic). Shortly after the capture of Rome it was possible to open this historic city to visits by our armed forces. In addition to these leaves and furloughs, parties of officers and men were sent daily by truck to beaches near Barletta, Italy.

These leaves were granted after the crews had completed approximately half of their missions. Many of the crews were sent to the beautiful Isle of Capri. Capri is located approximately twenty miles south of Naples in the Bay of Naples. It is about four miles long and two miles wide with a rugged surface and a precipitous coastline abounding in caves and fantastic rocks. For the men who were there during the summer of 1944, Capri certainly lived up to its fame for its sunshine, pure air, and luxuriant vegetation. Exploring the Island was a great joy for most of the fellows of the 783rd. It was a great

pleasure to lie on the beach and swim in the beautiful blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Many of the fellows made a complete circle of the island in row boats, stopping off at each of the grottos. Swimming and diving in the beautiful Blue Grotto, a cavern entered by a low, narrow opening from the sea, just large enough for a small boat to enter, and filled with a strange blue light, was an experience none of us can ever forget. This beautiful grotto is seventy feet long, thirty feet wide and approximately thirty-five feet deep. The time spent at the rest camps provided us with renewed energy to face the combat missions still ahead of us.

The were no planes lost or personnel injured during the next four missions. On 7 July, the mission was the oil refinery at Kassel, Germany, (near Blechhammer) where the Squadron lost its third plane and crew. Lt. Pilegard, flying "Duration Plus", lost an engine as he was approaching the target and fell behind the formation. He was losing altitude when last observed, but no one saw what happened to him and his crew. The crew was on their 28th mission. Lt. William Nelson, who was the original pilot of this crew, was made assistant operations officer and Pilegard took over as pilot. Five members of the crew were killed — they were Lt. Ralph Pilegard, T/Sgt. Durwood Huebner, Sgt. Rome Barker, Sgt. Jesse Henderson, and Sgt. Bernard Wolson. The other five men on the crew were caught and taken to a POW camp — this was the 28th mission for the crew. (Information supplied by Fred Robinson).

Prison Life

■ Fred J. Robinson

"Here is a short essay about my Prison Life in a German POW Camp. On July 7, 1944 on my 28th mission, we went to Blechhammer. Ralph Pilegard, our pilot, and four gunners in the tail section did not get out. On that fatal flight I landed near a forest and for three days I hid in the forest. On the third day, it rained all day. I walked out of the forest and saw a farm with a barn. I went in. Just a few minutes later someone else came in. I told him I was an American. He marched me into town and called the Germans, who placed me in a cellar that night.

The next morning two Germans drove up in a car. When I opened the back seat door, there was Ken Monge, the nose gunner. He was captured that morning. We traveled by car and train across Germany. We stayed very close to the German soldiers who were transporting us. We ended the trip at Stuttgart, where we spent seven to ten days in solitary confinement. Bread and water were all we had. Next stop was Wetzler, where I was allowed to write a note home. There we got some clothing and a Red Cross parcel.

We started the next trip in box cars with hundreds of POWs headed for Stalag Luft IV Prison Camp. This was near the Baltic Sea. We arrived there the first of August — I remember well a big German guard screaming at us, laying down the

law, and screaming what a bunch of swine we were. The camp wasn't finished. We were housed in a tent where we slept on the ground.

First roll call I fainted. I woke up in a British doctor's first aid room. He gave me a spoonful of mineral oil. I hadn't had a bowel movement for some days. I sure had one the next day.

In prison camp, we had roll calls every morning and whenever they wanted to call one. There were twenty men in our room with triple deck bunks. You slept with your clothes on. We had straw mattresses. Food was very scarce! ! ! ! I did a lot of walking around the compound, trying to keep in shape.

Around Christmas, someone got a choir together and we sang some Christmas songs in the latrine. It was a very nice program.

On February 6th we marched out of the prison camp. We were on the road ninety days just marching around Germany going nowhere, sleeping in the open on the ground or in barns if available. The weather was snowy, cold, wet, freezing and muddy. I had head lice, sore feet, dysentery. Food and water were very scarce. They told us at the end of the march we would get a Red Cross food parcel. We never did.

On May 6th I woke up, wandered out of the barn, and found no German guards around. I yelled, "No Germans around." We were almost free. That day near dusk one of the fellows found a farmer's truck which had some gas in it. He yelled, "Who is going with me?" I jumped on with about a dozen others. We ended up in a town occupied by the British. They put us up that night. The next morning I noticed all the bridges were blown up. They took us across the Elba River in a Duck. We went to a camp where prisoners were of all nationalities.

I heard there that some C-47s were flying out. I got aboard one with some other POWs. This plane flew to England. I was put in a hospital, where I could shower, was deloused, and given clean clothes. I was there 10 days, then released.

I went to London for six weeks, where there was nothing to do. We were allowed to draw 52 pounds on our back pay. The pubs sure got a lot of it. I left England on a Navy LST on June 22nd. I landed in Newport, VA. That is when I was really FREE. I was home in the good USA!"

Three Times and Out

≡ Ken Monge

"I guess it was a case of "three times and out" for our Liberator crew. In a previous raid over Budapest we had lost an engine and after a raid over the

submarine yards at Toulon, France, we were forced to land on a flat tire. So, when we were "briefed" the morning of July 7, 1944, for a raid over the oil refineries at Blechhammer, Germany, the entire crew had a sense of foreboding trouble.

Our bad luck started when we lost an engine through mechanical failure when our group was about an hour from the target. We were forced to drop our bombs to lighten the ship and fell behind the other planes. When the other bombers turned on the target we made a wide turn, hoping to catch them when they came off the target and thus have their protection on the long flight back to our base. But in the middle of our turn we were caught by the ever-present flak, which started a fire in the waist of the ship, killed the pilot, and forced us to bail out. Flak had come up through the nose of the ship, where I was stationed, and injured the navigator. A few pieces lodged in my head but it was nothing serious. Five of us were able to leave the ship, but we were widely separated on the way down.

But I got down okay, landing in a thick woods. The 'chute caught on a branch of a tree, the tree bent over from my weight, and I had landed flat on my feet in enemy territory. The other boys from our plane were nowhere to be seen, so I buried my gun, took out my compass, and after hiding all day, tried to set a course for Yugoslavia. I had no idea how friendly the natives in this part of Germany might be, so I did not wish to show myself, but hid by day in the woods and travelled at night. On the afternoon of the fifth day, I fell asleep by a road, tired, dirty and hungry, and woke to find a gun in my face, held by a German soldier. I was not too surprised as the Germans searched diligently for downed airmen. I was almost glad to be marched into the small village of Bodenstadt, where the local yokels were all lined up to see me go by. I guess they expected to see an ogre or something, and looked rather disappointed. This was one of the first air raids over this part of Germany and an American airman must have been quite a novelty.

Upon arrival in town I was taken to an office, stripped and searched. Then they tossed me into the local "clink," where I was given a bowl of potato soup and some black bread. About 7 o'clock in the evening I was taken by car, with two guards, and driven up the main street of town. The car stopped in front of a building, one of the guards went in, and a few minutes later came out with the radio operator from our plane.

From Bodenstadt we were transported to Olmutz, where we spent the night in the city jail. The next morning we were taken out for questioning by a Gestapo agent and then returned to the jail, where we stayed until about 10 o'clock that evening. Then began our train ride to the interrogation center for captured airmen at Wetzlar, Germany. This train ride was roundabout, as transportation in southern Germany was rather disrupted. We went through Prague and Pilsen in

Czechoslovakia, Nurenberg and then to Wetzlar, which is near Frankfurt on the Main. At the interrogation center we were again searched, placed in solitary confinement, and interrogated by German intelligence men.

Our next stop was Dulag Luft, a transit camp for airmen. Here Red Cross capture parcels were issued, which contained some of those articles, such as soap, razor, cigarettes, which make a man feel like a human being. At Dulag Luft we waited for ten days, or until a group was assembled for the next lap of our journey.

Our final destination and home for the next months was Stalag Luft No. 4 at Grossstychow, which is a small town near Belgrade in Pomerania, Germany, about 30 miles from the Baltic Sea. Here we settled down to a life of waiting. The camp was located in a large clearing surrounded by forest. It consisted of four compounds of "lagers," each about the size of a city block. American airmen only made up three of the lagers, and American and British airmen were housed in the fourth lager. Each compound was surrounded by barbed wire fencing about six feet apart, with coils of barbed wire placed in the space between the two fences. About 20 yards in from the inner fence was a warning wire. We were advised not to venture beyond this wire. Guards were stationed in towers at the four corner, and walking guards patrolled the entire fence area. There was no communication between prisoners in the four lagers.

Our living quarters were not too bad. We lived in barracks, about 20 to 26 men in a room, and had wooden beds. We were given sacks to fill with wood shavings to use as mattresses and they were not too bad until the shavings packed down when they became a little hard. Blankets and clothing were issued by the American Red Cross and aided us in being a little more comfortable.

In the summer we got up about 6 o'clock — a little later in the winter months — and about an hour later received some hot water or Jerry brew. After that liquid breakfast we had roll call and were then free to entertain ourselves until noon when we had lunch. Lunch consisted of a cup of vegetable soup, with a little horse meat tossed in at times. Then there was more free time, another roll call, and supper at 6 o'clock. Supper was a cup of boiled potatoes and a fourth of a loaf of Jerry bread, later cut down to one-sixth of a loaf. Jerry bread is made of soybean flour, sawdust, maybe a little potato, and a little rye or wheat flour when available. It was not light but fairly edible. That was our German ration in its entirety.

The American Red Cross supplemented the Jerry diet with weekly food parcels, two men splitting a parcel. Without these weekly food parcels from the Red Cross many of the prisoners would never have lived to return to their homes. The Red Cross, in addition to furnishing food, provided all our clothing, toilet articles,

and medical supplies.

The Y.M.C.A. furnished the prisoners with sports equipment and musical instruments. In the summer and when the weather was nice, the various lagers played kittenball, football, baseball, and league kitten ball games in the evenings. These league games would compare with the World Series on a slightly smaller scale. In the winter months the orchestra gave three musical shows a week. Our particular compound had a library made up of about 800 volumes, mostly English novels, and a few technical books. Reading was very popular with the "kriegies" and a good past-time.

While at Stalag Luft No. 4 we were allowed to write two letters and four post cards per month. These were written on specified forms and had to be printed. We were also allowed to receive mail, although it was slow in coming. I, personally, received seven letters from my wife, none from the rest of my family. We were also supposed to receive cigarette parcels and personal parcels containing food and clothing from our families; but they were so long delayed, very few packages reached the camp before we were evacuated. Of the 24 men in our room, only two received packages. One was a personal parcel and the other contained cigarettes. Needless to say, both were very welcome and highly prized.

The medical staff in Luft No. 4 was made up of three American doctors and two British doctors — five men to service the needs of approximately 10,000 prisoners. They did a wonderful job under very adverse conditions and will never be forgotten by the men who served some time in that particular camp.

Protestant church services were held each Sunday at 10:00 o'clock in the morning, with music by the compound choir. Two English ministers, also prisoners of war, did an excellent job of maintaining the morale of everyone. Bible study classes were held several times each week and were well attended.

Heat for the barracks and for the cooking done by prisoners was furnished by coal. Each man was furnished one lump of coal per day, a lump about the size of a pound of butter. This provided ample heat to keep the barracks fairly comfortable.

Thus our lives proceeded until February 6, 1945, when we were evacuated in the face of the Russian push to Stettin, and set out on a march that was to last three months. Before leaving camp we were issued some woolen clothing by the Red Cross and were also fortunate in receiving typhus shots. When we left camp I had fifteen packages of American cigarettes, which proved to come in very handy.

We started our march at 9 o'clock in the morning, accompanied by a plentiful number of German guards. Our supplies and personal articles were carried in

knapsacks on our backs. From Grossstychow we proceeded to Swinemunde, where we crossed the Oder River and on to Aklam. Then we continued towards New Brandenberg and the Elbe River. After crossing the Elbe River we arrived at Stalag 11-B at Fallinghostel on Good Friday. There we were allowed to remain for one week.

All the prisoners who were not in good health or who would not be able to make the trip were sent to another camp by train before we started from Luft No. 4. Of those that started the march, a few dropped by the wayside, but were picked up in wagons or carts and taken along with the rest of the group. Stops were made at farm houses where we spent the night in barns. The Germans kept their kohlrabi and potatoes in barns, covered with hay, and after a group of prisoners spent an evening there, the supply was sadly depleted. Cooking was done over fires in the open and a few of my letters from home disappeared as kindling.

Cigarettes and personal jewelry were good bartering items. Bread was a precious commodity and necessary to the lives of the prisoners. I sold a hematite ring to a Pole slave laborer for a loaf of bread, or rather some sandwiches. It was a little cracked but in the dusk he could not tell the difference. And no doubt he was more interested in the gold than the ring itself. Sometimes I was tempted to sell my wedding ring but always decided next day I would be hungry again, and would have neither ring nor bread, so I hung onto it. My fifteen packs of cigarettes disappeared in a hurry.

During the trip we received two Red Cross parcels per man and lived mostly on boiled potatoes, kohlrabi, and whatever bread and vegetables we could buy from the forced labor at the farms and villages where we stayed. We slept in groups of three to keep warm and we three buddies stuck together.

It was a tough trip but good old Yankee humor kept us all going. Some times when we got down-in-the-mouth, some fellow would come up with a good crack and we all would be laughing and ready to go again. Beside hunger and cold our two worst enemies were lice and dysentery. The lice were everywhere and could really take a bite out of a man. I had vowed I would let my hair grow until the end, but those German lice certainly changed my mind in a hurry and I had a real Jerry haircut before long. But it took a couple of de-lousing jobs to get rid of them. In fact my Dad is still a little skeptical and wonders if they are all gone.

After staying at Fallinghostel for a week, we were forced to leave in the face of the Allied western drive. We turned around and retraced our steps to the Elbe river, crossing on a ferry. It took quite a few trips to get the boys across, and all the time some English planes were circling overhead. We had heard of some groups of prisoners being strafed in error, and wondered if those pilots up there

knew who we were. But I guess they did, because shortly after the last prisoners crossed the river, the planes swooped down and made hash out of that ferry.

On May 2, 1945, we were in the vicinity of Luneberg and were having a hard time staying out of the way of the English, who were all around us. So our camp Man of Confidence went out with one of the German officers and they returned shortly with an English jeep from an advance scouting party. That was a great day! We figured we had travelled about 700 miles on our march, and no one was sorry to see it end. All the German guards threw down their guns, and they were now prisoners of war.

The British immediately sent us to one of their advance stations where we received some white bread and tea. That white bread tasted like chicken! It was delicious. A truck convoy took us to Luneberg where we were clothed, fed, and de-loused. We stayed there over night and continued by convoy to Emdstettin. There we remained for three days or until we were flown by British bombers to Brussels, Belgium. Our next stop was Namur, Belgium, where we were turned over to the American forces.

That old Uncle Sam really takes care of his boys! We felt like human beings again and began to gain back some of that weight we had lost on our three months' trek over Germany. We were given some money — first jingle in our pants for a long time — clean clothing, and a chance to write home to let folks know we were o.k. and on our way back to the U.S.A.

From Namur we went to Camp Luck Strike, which was the gathering place for forces being returned to the States. We sweated out a month there, awaiting our turn for transportation. We did take a few days off for a trip to Paris, but did not want to stay too long for fear we would miss a boat home. On Sunday we boarded a Navy transport, 7,000 of us. It was crowded; I got K.P. duty so had something to do to pass the time.

On June 20, we docked at Newport News, Virginia; we were given an opportunity to call home to let everyone know we had reached the states o.k. We were immediately sent to Camp Patrick Henry in Newport News where we were processed for our trip to Fort Snelling in Minneapolis. We arrived at Fort Snelling on June 27 and received our furlough papers at 6 o'clock that night. I called my wife and told her to come out to get me. She was there around 7 and we went home. Now I had a 60-day furlough, and after that I was to report to a redistribution center to find out what my future would be.

It was a tough ten months as a prisoner of war, and I wouldn't care to go through it again. If I had known what was ahead of me I am not sure I could have made the

trip, but now that I look back on it, I didn't suffer too much and no doubt it was a very valuable experience. I certainly did learn to appreciate more than ever my home and everything life in these United States can mean."

The mission on 8 July was to Vienna, Austria, and the target was the Florisdorf Oil Refinery. Lt. Jumper's plane was shot down about thirty miles from the target. He had one engine feathered at the I.P. and another one on fire. All ten of the crew bailed out. There were about thirty German fighters in the area. At this time, the Group's total loss of airplanes to enemy action was thirteen.

The 42nd mission was to Nimes, France, on 12 July. This was a very rough mission where we lost our fifth plane and crew. Lt. Kara had this to say about this mission:

■ "Almost 'scragged' us today — flew on left wing of Group and Wing leader. Thirty minutes before target we were attacked head on by six ME-109's. I looked up into the blazing end of any number of 20-mm cannons. No damage done by fighters or our gunners the first pass. They came around three times more head on and got Capt. Swanzy right in the cockpit the second time. He was on the right wing of the leader. Swanzy had an eleven man crew, assistant operations officer Nelson and copilot Crabtree; Smitty and Thomas were flying with him. Eight chutes were seen out of the plane; very unlikely that Swanzy or Nelson got out. (Nelson did get out, but Swanzy and Sgt. Montana were killed). Right after these attacks, the Group navigator got off course and led us right up a railroad that had very accurate, intense, and heavy flak on it. We flew in this flak all the way to the target. En route my ship was perforated and number 1 engine was on fire, number 4 turbo was shot out, compass shot out, and the flight instruments were shot out. We got to the target where the flak stopped, dropped our bombs and turned for home. (Shredded tinfoil was very effective in jamming the German radar. If we had brought the tinfoil along to throw out on this mission, there would have been much less damage to the planes). Had to feather number 1, replaced the amplifier in number 4 turbo and checked the ship for more damage. Found that our control cables were severed and some of our gas cells were shot up. Thanks to self-sealing tanks we lost very little gas. During all this, the crew was in a near panic. We managed to stay with the formation to the coast where we dropped down and headed for Corsica. Reaching Corsica with still 16,000 feet of altitude, we decided to make Naples. Got to Naples and landed after contending with a crowded pattern and 3 engines. After we got down, our gas tanks leaked like a sieve. Notified Group and Wing of our whereabouts and went back to the base the next day. Learned later that the Group shot down nine fighters. (The official 15th Air Force records show we shot down ten German fighter planes). Twenty attacked the Group all together. No other ships in Group lost. Bates and Pace landed at Corsica badly crippled. Twenty-seven of the thirty-seven planes made it back to Pantanella — **two** in formation. Most of the planes landed at different

bases such as Corsica, Rome, Naples, etc., on their way back."

The next two missions were to Porto Marghera, Italy, and were uneventful. Group mission number 44 was flown on 15 July 1944 to Ploesti and Lt. Kara gives us this account of their experience during the mission:

■ "Target was obscured by huge columns of oil smoke from bombing of the Wings before us. We did not drop our bombs. Close to "scragging" us again, everything was OK over the target; ten minutes after leaving the target, we lost all of the oil out of number 1 engine and feathered it. A little later number 2 prop froze at 2,150 rpm. We dropped back and salvoed our bombs and was trailing the group back when we were attacked by five fighters. I dropped the nose and put on all the power we had left and zig-zagged till luckily we caught up to the Group and the fighters left us. The left waist and the top turret gunners shot down one German fighter and probably a second. Flak over the target was heavy, accurate, and intense as usual. Group lost no ships today. So far the Group has lost fourteen ships to enemy action."

The next two missions were to Wiener-Nudorff, Austria, and to southern Germany. The squadron loss no planes or personnel during these missions. Group mission number 47 was to Munich, Germany. The target was the Allach Aircraft Factory. The flak here was very heavy and accurate. The Group lost four planes, two from the 783rd. Lts. Bonds' and Greenwood's planes were shot down, but fortunately all of the men bailed out and were taken to POW camps. The enlisted men on Lt. Greenwood's crew were in Stalag Luft number 4 prison camp. (Sgt. McCloskey's account of the march across Germany is included as a part of this history). Each of the planes carried ten 500-pound bombs. The results of the bomb drop showed three-fourths of the bombs in the target area. There were a number of enemy fighters in the area, but our fighter escort took care of them for us. We received only one fighter attack.

Mission number 48 was to Friedrichshafen, Germany, where we bombed the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin Works. Flak was heavy, but there was no serious damage to any of the 783rd planes. The next mission was to Ploesti, Rumania, on 22 July 1944. Again the squadron was very lucky in that there were no planes or crews lost. On 26 July 1944, the 783rd Squadron was a part of a massive bomb raid to the Goering Tank Works at Linz, Germany. There were seventeen groups from the 15th Air force, for a total of more than 500 B-24 airplanes, each carrying five 1,000-pound bombs that hit the same target. Our bombs were dropped, but the results could not be seen because of the heavy smoke caused by the bombs which were dropped by the groups ahead of us. The pictures taken showed the target completely demolished. The flak was very heavy and some of the planes were damaged, but all made it back to the base. There were some fighters seen but our escort fighters took good care of them. Thus far the Group has lost nineteen planes and the 783rd has lost eight to enemy action.

The mission for 27 July was the Zwolfaxing Airdrome near Vienna, Austria. The area was completely covered with clouds and we dropped the bombs on the Badvoslav Airdrome about twelve miles from our primary target. The results were good; we hit several twin- and four-engine aircraft which were parked on the ground. Each of our planes carried thirty-six fragmentation cluster bombs. The flak was heavy and fairly accurate. Some of our planes received flak damage but none were shot down.

The Group mission number 53, on 28 July 1944, was to Ploesti, Rumania. This was a special mission for M/Sgt. John U. Walker, Chief Operations Clerk, who requested and received permission from 15th Air Force to accompany a combat mission as an observer. John made the trip to Ploesti with Lt. Stewart's crew. Here is Lt. Kara's account of the mission:

■ "Each plane carried ten 500-pound general purpose bombs and the target was the Astro Romano Oil Refinery, since there was some oil being refined at the Ploesti refineries at this time. Thirty minutes from the target number 1 turbo went out — we dropped back and out of formation so we dropped our bombs and tried to catch up. We followed the Group to the target then turned left and planned to meet them when they came off the target — couldn't find them so I got into another Group formation. In the meantime number 2 engine was quitting — we managed to nurse some power out of it so we kept it running. Coming off the target we ran into some flak — feathered number 2 later, but made it back to the base. The results of the mission were good; we could see large columns of black smoke coming from the target. The flak was not as heavy as on earlier missions, and the squadron lost no planes or crew members".

Capt. Fred A. Johnson's Crew

■ Don Kay

"The crew joined together about 1 April 1944 at the B-24 Combat Crew Training Base at Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas. Fred had finished B-24 Transition at Liberal, Kansas and picked up a copilot and five of our gunners at Salt Lake City on his way to Biggs. Jack Meyer and Don Kay, fresh out of Navigation and Bombardier schools, came aboard at Biggs.

Shortly after starting crew training we changed copilots. Luckily for us Larry "The Beast" Seigler had come directly from twin-engine advanced to the pilots' pool at Biggs and was duly assigned to our crew. Claude Sprecker also joined us at Biggs to become our other waist gunner. We were part of EP6-14, aka the Class of "El Paso June 14th" (date of graduation).

After finishing combat crew training we left Biggs for Topeka, Kansas. We didn't

draw a plane so took the train to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. Ninety combat crews left the States on 1 July 1944 on the SS Santa Rosa for Europe. When we saw the Rock of Gibraltar, we knew we were headed for Naples — arriving on 15 July 1944. We stayed at a Replacement Center called Bagnoli outside Naples until 22 July 1944 when 8 crews were shipped by truck to the 55th Wing. Four crews went to the 460th Group and four to the 465th. The 465th crews all joined the 783rd — Johnson, Williams, Owens and Parkinson.

On 28 July Jack Meyer and Don Kay flew their first mission to Ploesti with Stan Pace while Fred Johnson flew as Cecil Bates' copilot. Good old John U. Walker flew along with Lt. Stewart's crew — for his first and only mission! The crew flew their first mission as a unit to Genoa, Italy on 2 August 1944. The crew flew together from then on except for the week that Don Kay attended Lead Bombardier School at Bari early in August and while he was at Capri in October. All went well with them except for a crash landing near the base on 10 September while starting on a mission to bomb the air field at Nis, Yugoslavia. The plane was totaled, but no one was seriously injured.

Fred became "E" Flight Commander, Jack Meyer Flight Navigator and Don Kay Flight Bombardier on 15 October. Unfortunately, Jack Meyer and Jimmy Tuccio left the crew shortly after this due to the effects of the crash — Jack shipped home to the States and Jimmy was reassigned to Squadron Operations.

Harry Greene joined us as Navigator — he'd come over on George Williams' crew, but they'd been shot down. Billy Holbert, from Ellis' crew, finished his missions with us as Ball Gunner. About Christmas time Fred was promoted to Captain. He was also given a DFC for assuming Group Lead on the infamous Blechhammer raid when Colonel Lokker went down.

We flew as often as possible during the fall and winter — going to targets such as Vienna, Blechhammer, Regensburg, Linz, Munich, etc., but due to the poor weather none of us finished until late February or early March. Of the four crews that arrived in the Squadron on 22 July '44, Johnson's was the only one to finish without a loss, Harry Greene, the only Navigator and Bob Wills (Owen's crew), the only Copilot. Larry Seigler finished a few days after us — finishing his missions with his own crew.

It was a blessing that we were sent to fly with the best damn Squadron in the 15th Air Force".

≡ Don Kay

"I arrived in the squadron on the 22nd of July 1944 and flew my first mission on the 28th. My last one was on the 12th of March 1945. There were 90 combat

crews which left Newport News, VA on June 30th for Naples on the S.S. Santa Rosa — a Grace Line cruise ship converted to a troop transport and crewed by the British. Now, back to the questions!

I wonder why I'm still here!! Of the 90 crews which arrived in Naples, ten of us were sent to the 55th Bomb Wing — Hdqs in Spinazzola, Italy — four of us were then sent to the 465th B.G. which promptly assigned us all to the 783rd Sqdn. We had trained together at the B-24 Combat Crew Training Base at Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas. The four bombardiers had all graduated from Big Spring Bombardier School on the 18th of March 1944. They were John Fritz, killed when his plane crash landed (shot up over the target and made it back to Vis) on the Isle of Vis off the Yugoslavian Coast, was thrown into the bomb bay on impact where the wings collapsed and crushed his legs. The British troops manning the field had to cut his legs off to get him out of the plane. He died of shock that night in the hospital.

John DePlue — KIA — blew up on take off in December 1944 on the 49th mission. My plane was right behind him and we blew a tire stopping, so we didn't go that day. I ended up covering the few remains of the 2 pilots with their parachutes.

Louis Dussault, shot down over Vienna in the fall of 1944, was a POW in Germany. He was sent to a different POW camp than the other crew members which may have had an adverse effect on him. He now lives in Lowell, MA, his original home town. He refused to answer letters, phone calls, or the door. We tried to reach him but he had a sick wife and they "crawled into their shells." Louis cared for his dying wife for a number of years — never left her side, barely left the house. Just never had time to do anything else. We had a nice visit in 1985.

It wasn't exactly like the TV or movies. I was quite lucky in a lot of respects. Although I survived a plane crash in Italy during September '44, had my friends blown-up in front of me, had flak make a sieve out of my plane, saw planes blown-up near me, etc., I never had the experience of massed fighter attacks on our group. They were there, but always went after other outfits when I flew. We lost 5 planes to fighters in 2 days, 3 one day — I flew the next — 2 more the next day! Somebody upstairs must like me!!!

The worst part was waiting for the Airdrome Officer to come around and wake you up in the middle of the night for briefing. You could hear him going from tent to tent, some of which had doors on them (winterized) and you'd hear them banging. Even when your crew wasn't posted for a mission there was a possibility that you'd be called to fill in for a bombardier, navigator, etc. It was

also difficult if you were "DNIF" (Duty Not Involved in Flying) head cold, sore throat, upset stomach, etc. and the rest of your crew had to fly. You really sweat out their return from the day's mission.

The first few missions were scary because it was all so new. After you survived a few you were confident and this lasted for a good part of your tour. Then as you got closer to the magic number of 50 (or 35 sorties later on), you got scared all over again. Those middle ones wore you down whether you realized it or not. During the summer we flew 2 or 3 days in a row, skipped one or two days, and then were off again for some more. If you were still around during the winter, the weather got very bad and as clouds built up over the Alps, we couldn't get a bomber formation through to the targets. We had day after day of "stand-downs" and "boredom" set in. That's tough on active young men aged 18 to 23. We had a few "old timers" at 25 or 26 years old, usually named "Pappy."

At least we came home to a hot shower, warm food, and a clean bed. The whole thing ran the spectrum from fun and thrills to sheer terror. When you turned on the bomb run and flew straight and level for 5 to 10 minutes while the enemy filled the sky with flak bursts, you felt like you were standing naked in the show window the big department store in your home town! You could hear the bursts over the roar of the 4 engines; hear the pieces of flak going through the aluminum fuselage; and worst of all, see your bombsight optics "black out" from a burst right below you. These all combined to bring you a lot closer to the "Man Upstairs." There were two basic thoughts which helped sustain me when the chips were down: (1) The USAAF had thought enough of me to make me a commissioned officer and I had a certain responsibility to uphold that trust; (2) There were 10 men in each of the planes in my formation and if they could go through this combat I sure as hell could too! Believe me, it was tough at times to "hang in there" but somehow I made it along with a whole bunch of others.

My first mission was on July 28, 1944 to Ploesti, Rumania, the famous oil fields. Fred Johnson our A/C flew as co-pilot. Jack Meyer was our navigator. I flew with Capt. Stanley Pace (retired Colonel, West Point '43, and now President of TRW in Cleveland, Ohio) and his crew. This was common practice for the A/C's to fly as co-pilot with an old timer on his first mission and then go out alone with his own crew. Stan had his own flight engineer and gunners — bombardier and navigator stayed home. All was fine until we got over the middle of Yugoslavia and strayed over a known flak battery, which promptly laid a few rounds off our wing. When I realized that someone was trying to kill me, I tried to put on my parachute pack, flak suit and helmet. All this time my knees were shaking!! It's a terrible feeling to realize for the first time that there are people down there trying to shoot you out of the sky! I remember it as clearly as if it were yesterday. Can't remember in which position we flew in the formation, but it wasn't a lead spot as I

was too new.

Probably we hit the target about 9:00 AM. I read some place recently that the July 28, 1944 high level raid was the mission with the highest losses — after the August 1, 1943 low level raid. We flew good formation to and from the target. The 465th had a reputation for flying a tight formation. As I recall, the 783rd box stayed together and we didn't have any losses. Maybe the group did, but I can't remember. Weather was beautiful all the way to and from the target. After my first experience with flak over Yugoslavia, the flak at Ploesti was an anti-climax so to speak. We never really saw the aiming point as the smoke from the earlier groups plus the excellent German smoke pots obscured the target. We had to "offset bomb." I remember seeing a group of B-17s from the 5th Bomb Wing, off to our left and 5000 feet above us, drop through another B-24 formation and hit a plane or two. Some chutes were observed. It really was an awesome sight. I heard fighter attacks on the radio, but none came after our box. I'm sure I thought, "What the hell am I doing here?" Yes, I was scared!

There really wasn't much to do during our time off. It was difficult to plan very far ahead for we really never knew when we'd fly. I went to Rome on a 3-day pass in early September after we crash landed. Might as well tell that one now. During a milk-run to Nis, Yugoslavia (an airfield target) we lost an engine while over the Adriatic, turned around and headed home. For some reason we decided to bring the bombs back instead of killing some fish. I hopped into the bomb bay and started to put the "cotter-pins" back in the nose and tail fuses to make the bombs "safe." I think we had ten 500 pounders so I had only 20 pins to replace. About the time I was 90% finished, the other engine on the same side started to act-up. By this time we were over Italy and in radio contact with our tower. In my haste to get back on the flight deck I reported "all bombs safe," but I forgot to open the bomb bay doors. The A/C (Fred Johnson) told our co-pilot (Larry Siegler) to "salvo" the bombs. Larry was affectionately known in the Sqdn as "The Beast", because of his massive chest and arms due to weight lifting. He grabbed the salvo lever and gave one big jerk. He forgot that one short pull opens the doors and the same action drops the bombs. As it was done in one motion, the doors weren't open yet, so the bombs went right through them, leaving them flapping in the breeze. B-17 doors open down while B-24 doors roll up! This left us with much drag due to the flapping doors and a massive hole in the bottom of the aircraft.

It became very obvious that we'd never make the base so Fred looked for a nice flat field. Flying with two engines out on the same side took superior airmanship (which Fred had plenty of). We barely skimmed over a river bank as Fred dropped the landing gear. The gear took the initial shock and promptly tore off, bouncing us up over a small rise and into a field which had been freshly plowed. We skidded for a few hundred yards, leaving propellers and miscellaneous spare

parts flying off the plane. As soon as the plane came to a halt we all jumped out and started to run toward a large manure pile (to hide behind!). Fred yelled at me to check the waist for the condition of our gunners. Luckily the plane never caught fire nor was anyone seriously injured. One gunner was thrown into the open bomb bay on impact and rolled around on the ground as the plane slid across the field. He lost his wrist watch, was dirty from head to toe, had no cuts or broken bones! A small miracle!! The plane, which was almost brand new, was a total loss.

Harold Owens, the A/C of the plane, headed the search party looking for us. He flew another plane and found us. When we got back to the Sqdn, he wanted to know what had happened and why we ruined his new plane! Poor Harold was killed in December when his plane blew up on the runway on the 49th mission. Super guy! DePlue was his Bombardier.

A day or so later our crew was told to be packed by 8:00 AM the next morning as we were going to a rest camp on the Isle of Capri. We all showed up in Class A uniforms ready to go. The Operations Corporal came by and asked me, "What are you doing here, Lt. Kay?" No one had bothered to tell me that only three officers per crew went at once, and I drew the short straw. A day or so later they sent me to Rome for three days. I finally had my chance at Capri during October when I went with Capt. Harvey Wright's crew. Bill Mitchell, the co-pilot, has been a good friend of mine ever since. He runs a plumbing business in Youngstown, Ohio. They were shot down a week after rest camp and Harv was killed by the Germans on the ground. Mitch was a 1/Lt and celebrated his 20th birthday as a POW.

I met a very nice Red Cross girl from Massachusetts while there, and I stopped in to see her again on my way home after finishing my tour. While dancing with her at the hotel, I met my Congresswoman Claire Booth Luce. Had a chance to dance with her also. How many people have the opportunity to dance with their political representatives?? She was a most charming lady and a good dancer! This was a one day and night trip to Capri, but the real rest camp deal was for one week. As a side note to this story, I'd promised my wife when I proposed that she'd get a vacation on the Isle of Capri and stay at the "Quissasona Hotel." It's the most famous and attractive one on the Isle.)

In 1977 while working in Saudi Arabia my wife and I spent three nights at the "Quissasona." By some quirk of fate the manager at that time was the son of the manager in 1944-45 when I'd stayed there before. He really was "super" to us and made our stay a dream come true! Only one of the staff was unfriendly to "the American Airman from WW II."

On days off we could "hitch-hike", if a jeep wasn't available, into the city of Cerignola and go to the Red Cross Club or the PX. Spinazzola was our Wing Hdqs, but it was very small and had a poor PX. Most of our spare time was spent hanging around the Sqdn area. We played softball and volleyball on warmer days. During the winter most of the time was spent reading or playing cards at the NCO or Officers' Clubs. Occasionally we'd have a party at the Sqdn Officer Club with real girls. There was a field hospital near us that had US nurses. There were also American Red Cross girls nearby , and a South African Hospital about an hour away. I still have the 2nd/Lt "Pip" given to me by one of the South African "Sisters." It's attached to the zipper tab on my old leather A-2 flying jacket. Most evenings were spent drinking at the Club. Officers got one bottle of liquor per month plus four cans of beer per week. We had local wine and gin available. The mix for gin was grapefruit juice! I can't drink gin to this day!!! As you can see, we led a rather boring life, but much better than a POW.

As I recall, briefing and debriefing were very serious parts of our missions. There were no dramatics as in the movies. The gunners had their own briefing while the pilots, bombardiers, and navigators met together. When we came into the briefing room, an old and very large stable, there was a sheet covering the map. When the briefing started, the Intelligence Officer pulled the sheet back and we had our first glimpse of our target. Colored yarn showed us the route into and off the target. Known flak batteries were shown along the route in and out. Various staff officers then briefed us; i.e., Mission Leader, Weather, Bombardier, Navigator, Intelligence Communi-cation, and finally the chaplain. They were not boring for it was for our survival.

Intelligence told us what opposition we could expect: i.e., flak along the route and at the target, number and type of guns; also fighters ME109s, FW190, JU88's, etc. Bombardiers gave us the various settings for the bombsight — altitude, trail, disc speed, etc. Bomb load fuse settings were also included. Weather, what to expect on the route up, over target, on route home and what to expect on return to base. Mission Leader, what he expected as to formation flying, power settings, stragglers, etc. Communications, various radio frequencies plus security requirements. Chaplain, prayers.

After briefing we went by trucks to the Sqdn areas at the flight line, stopping at the Parachute Shop to get chutes plus other gear like Mae Wests and oxygen masks. Then we went to our individual planes at our "hard-stands." Each crew chief had pre-flighted the planes. They were already full of gasoline (100 octane, 2700 gallons topped off), bombs (maximum of 10-500 G.P.'s) ten .50 caliber machine guns fully loaded. I checked all the turrets with each gunner (the Bombardier was the Armament Officer on each crew). Since we were graduate Aerial Gunners also, we checked each bomb to see that the shackles which held

the bombs on the racks were in the racks correctly, all the arming wires were correctly installed, the fuses to see all the cotter pins were safely in place.

In order to obtain power in the aircraft we utilized a gasoline fueled auxiliary power source (a "Put-Put") while on the ground. With this unit on, the turrets were checked for azimuth or elevation movement. The bombsight was also checked for proper functioning. Finally, the engines were started and the check list performed. Only minor problems were repaired. We still had a few minutes spare time for personal needs — like a last minute trip to the latrine. Most hard stands had one or two 55 gallon drums set in the ground over a 4 or 5 foot deep hole. The drums had a hole cut in the top so you could sit on them. They sure were cold on a winter morning before the frost melted. Tough on the first guy to use them!! We had no way to relieve our bowels in the air. Finally flares were shot off to announce start engine time. We then taxied out for take off. Double red flares were shot off if the mission was "scrubbed"!! A very happy moment!!!

The quota of officers and enlisted men eligible for rest camps, leaves, and furloughs increased during the month. With the approach of warmer weather, swimming at the nearby beaches fronting the blue Adriatic continued to be a popular diversion, particularly on "stand down" days. Many of the crews were sent to the Isle of Capri and other rest camps in the area for a well-deserved rest. Many of the flight crew members had thirty-five to forty missions by the last of July, making them eligible for their second trip to a rest camp.

Both the officers' and enlisted men's clubs were now operating on a regular basis and were the source of many interesting parties. The good health of the Squadron personnel continued to reflect the many precautionary measures taken to guard against the usual diseases so prevalent in that section of Italy during the summer months.

The Squadron had lost seven crews through the month of July. Out of the seventy-one men that were shot down, thirteen were killed. Approximately forty-six of the men were captured and taken to German prison camps. Twelve of the crew members escaped capture and made it back to Pantanella.

On August 3, 1944, the mission was to Friedrichshafen, Germany. This was a very rough mission. We lost Capt. Pace's and Lt. Elliott's crews. Pace's plane was on fire and seven chutes were seen by other crew members. Elliott's plane was out of control and four chutes were seen. Fortunately all of the fellows bailed out and were take prisoners by the Germans.

MISSION NUMBER 56

█ Charles Ellis

"In the Fall of 1943 our crew, along with nine others, was reassigned from Wendover Field, Utah, to the 465th Group at McCook. Three of the crews were assigned to the 783rd. This was a real break for us. It was great to join a cadre already well organized. Also, even though we had finished our tactical phase training, the additional experience we gained at McCook was most welcome.

We were glad to have Burt Andrus, our C.O., join us for the flight overseas, which was rather uneventful except for an interesting stop at Tindouf. We landed in the middle of a Sahara Desert sandstorm on a hard sand runway. We were advised by radio that the weather in the Marrakech area would not permit our continuing without oxygen. Tindouf was the permanent base of the French Foreign Legion. Crew members enjoyed bartering with the Arabs, but were glad to leave after a four day stay.

All of the crews have many stories to tell, and I am impressed by the diary that Kara kept. Anything we say may sound redundant by comparison, but of all the missions we flew, the 3 August, 1944 Friedrichshafen raid would probably be the most memorable. I will try to describe it as it affected our crew. A general description is shown in the Unit Citation included by Colonel Andrus in his booklet written following the Colorado Springs reunion. Some repetition is intentional, since not all members have the booklet.

The target was the Manzell-Dornier Works which manufactured parts for jet and pilotless aircraft (we later found out they also made parts for V2 rockets being used against England). As were most major targets, it was well defended; though the flak was heavy, I don't remember if we lost any planes on the bomb run. Our bombardier indicated on the intercom that it looked like an accurate strike.

About ten minutes off the target, the tail and ball turret gunner reported that a group of FW 190s (about forty) were approaching. They had broken through a cloud cover about two thousand feet below our altitude. This is the first time any of us ever heard our ten fifty-caliber machine guns firing at the same time. I believe the FWs made two passes before leaving. Reports from the crew on intercom indicated several German planes shot down and some of our own planes on fire. Later the score was nine enemy planes shot down and nine damaged. We lost eight aircraft. We were flying on Stan Pace's left wing. He was on fire and pulled out of the formation to avoid danger to other aircraft.

Taking stock of our own aircraft, we could determine that almost the entire left aileron was shot away and there were large holes in the left wing and a few small ones in the right. (We later counted twenty-three hits by twenty millimeter cannon fire.) With full aileron trim and some control pressure, the plane flew well. We were grateful no shells had penetrated the fuselage and for no injuries.

It seems almost miraculous that we didn't have a fuel leak. We left the formation at three thousand feet as we approached Pantanella; we circled the field until we could determine what might happen on landing when we lowered the flaps and gear, which seemed to lock in place as usual. Damage to the left flap was visible when lowered to twenty degrees, but flight characteristics were not affected. We decided to leave everything as it was. Our short field approach and landing were normal.

This is the end of the story, except that after this trip, San Souci sported a new left silver wing installed by our fine crew chief, Sgt Swartz, and his very capable mechanics.

When I am asked to tell war stories, I don't. Some people misinterpret them and think you are boasting. First of all, our crew does not consider themselves heroes — only doing their job. Second, there was not any one member of our crew more important than another. The 783rd had extremely high morale, and so did our crew, due to mutual respect and a closeness that soldiers have when they fight together.

We are grateful we made out fifty missions with only one loss (serious flak injury over North Italy to Bill Weir, ball turret gunner, a superior person).

The Good Lord gets all the credit — you don't dodge flak!!"

Mission number 57 on 6 August was to Avignon, France, where we bombed a bridge in preparation for the invasion of southern France. Each plane carried five 1000-pound general purpose bombs. This was a long but easy mission — we did not lose any planes or have any crew members injured.

Mission Number 58

■ Albert Yatkauskas

"August 7, 1944 our target was the synthetic oil refineries at Blechhammer, Germany. We arrived at the target without any fighter attacks and headed into intense and heavy flack. The bombardier had announced bombs away and we were turning away from the target at 11:33 A.M. when we received a direct hit in number 3 engine. Immediately our plane (NOBODY'S BABY) burst into flames.

I knew we were hit badly as the flames were outside of my tail turret. There was no warning to abandon ship, as apparently the intercom was knocked out. I climbed out of the turret and bounced around until I was able to attach my chute. The waist gunner had already bailed out as the camera hatch was open. The bomb bay was in flames and our ball gunner was standing at the open hatch waiting for me to bail out. I jumped out the camera hatch and as my chute opened my flying

helmet and gloves flew off. As I started to float down I saw the smoke and flames, and heard the flak guns still going strong. I looked around and saw scattered chutes in the distance. I didn't know if all of our crew had bailed out.

I landed in a ravine surrounded by bushes and trees. I hid my chute and checked for any sprains or injuries. Apparently I had made a good descent and didn't have a scratch on me. I figured I would hide in the bushes and plan to escape. I checked my escape kit and found good maps of France, Italy, and the Balkans but no map of Germany. Then I heard the footsteps and buried myself in a pile of leaves face down. The footsteps were so close that I thought I would be stepped on. As they died away I looked up and saw a German officer with pistol in hand walking away. I thought I was home free, but had forgotten about the warning we received at briefing about falling in the hands of the German civilians. They had apparently seen me hiding and came in my direction screaming and shouting. I threw up my hands to surrender and they started shooting at me. When I realized they were trying to kill me, I started to run and was shot in the left thigh and went down. They ran up and kicked me in the body and face. I covered my face with my hands and the kicking stopped. A pistol was pointed at my head and I saw a German soldier had arrived. The civilians stripped me of my uniform, boots, and shoes and left me in my underwear. They tried to question me but all I would give was my name, rank, and serial number. I guess they finally gave up and left. A short time later one of them came back with his wife and children. They stood around and looked at me but didn't molest me. A short time later they left.

I was lying in an open field with the sun beating down on me; looking at the blood oozing out and wondering how to stop the flow. The soldier guarding me fell asleep. Ants and bugs were crawling over me. My first aid kit was gone, and all I could do was apply pressure to the femoral artery to keep from bleeding to death. Strange thoughts kept going through my head. What will happen to me? My family and friends will not know. Will I survive this?

My wrist watch had not been taken away and the time was 1:00 P.M. The guard was fast asleep. Then I saw two more German soldiers coming towards me. They laid down their weapons and tried to move me out of the sun. As they lifted me I screamed in pain so they dropped me where I lay and took off. I kept wondering when I will get some medical attention. Maybe an hour later the guard woke up. I kept asking for medical aid. He shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. I pointed to my wound and watch. He came over and pointed to the number six on my watch. Sure enough at 6 o'clock the medic came with a horse drawn cart filled with straw. The medic had a splint for below the knee, which was too short. A long broken tree branch was then applied to my leg and he wrapped it. I was then put into the cart and finally on the way to the hospital. The medic and two guards came along. On the road we ran into some S. S. troops who spit on me. After

awhile we stopped in a village and everyone was out to see what an American looked like. I was thirsty and asked for water. Someone gave me something to drink – like cool aid. Finally we came to the hospital and I was brought inside and laid down on a wooden table. I asked what they were going to do. They applied ether and I passed out.

When I came to I was in a small room with three other Americans. One was our ball gunner (John Wilby), and a pilot from another plane that had been shot down. I looked at my leg and saw that it was bandaged and in splints. Figured it would be okay. Then next the morning I was taken back to the operating room and laid on a small wooden table. I asked if they intended to amputate but they said everything would be all right. Ether was again administered and when I came to, in the room, the other men were silent. They knew my left leg had been taken off above the knee. I didn't. My ball gunner looked over and told me that my leg was gone. I looked down and it was gone. I didn't cry or scream, just lay there quietly.

They kept a 24-hour guard on our room and it was closed all the time so the civilians visiting would not see us. We heard people talking outside our room every day. One day the pilot asked our ball gunner to pull up the shade on the door so everyone could look in. After a short while we heard a commotion. The door flew open and a big hefty nurse came charging in and went to the pilot and bawled him out. She pulled the shade down and slammed the door shut. We all had ourselves a good laugh. The pilot had a broken leg, his nose gunner a broken leg and arm. Our ball gunner had a flak wound and burns on his face. He was on the loose for a day but had given up because of his wounds. Our meals weren't much; we had some oatmeal, soup, potatoes, and bread once a day. They were short of supplies and we were using paper bandages. At night some of the German wounded, from the Russian front, would come in and ask us to help fight the Russians. Naturally we ignored them. We were there thirteen days when they came in and told us we were being shipped to a prisoner camp. The morning we were moved, we were brought down on stretchers to the reception area to await transportation. While waiting, one of the soldiers was handling his luger when it went off. It scared the hell out of us and everyone came running to see what was happening. When things quieted down they took us out to an ambulance. The ride to the train station was a rough one. The driver was a fanatic Nazi who enjoyed bouncing around. One of the guards, an old man, cradled my stump in his arms so that I wouldn't feel the pain. At the train station we were put on a hospital car with some Russians. We were issued some sausage and black bread but none was given to the Russians. We shared what we had with them. Next morning we made a short stop and were given hot cereal for breakfast but nothing for the Russians. Later that day the train came to a stop to put off the Russian POW's. One of them had a broken back but the Germans would not let his buddies use a stretcher, even though there was one handy, when they took him off the train. We

could hear him scream as his buddies carried him off.

Toward evening we arrived at Sagan Luft III which was to be our new home. When I was brought inside the compound the staff in charge called for the medics. An American doctor, also a POW looked me over and said he didn't know what to do. Later an English doctor, also a POW, looked me over and took charge. He issued a call for blood donors, because I had lost a lot of blood. How this man managed to set up blood transfusion without any medical equipment was amazing. The amputation was guillotine surgery and the wound was left open. This English surgeon and his English medic took care of my needs and I slowly recovered. I believe that their efforts saved my life. Later they told me that when I was brought in they didn't have any hope for my recovery. Finally after several weeks, they issued me a pair of crutches so I could get around.

At night I couldn't sleep too well because I had nightmares of burning planes exploding and wondering if all of our crew had survived. I didn't see our ball gunner after I arrived at POW camp and had no idea where he was located. There was nothing much for me to do physically except read, play cribbage, and checkers. All at camp were hoping that the war would end soon so we could all go home. The main topic was food, since the meals provided by the Germans were skimpy. Occasionally we received American Red Cross food parcels and those kept us from complete starvation.

In October 1944 the Swiss repatriation committee came to our camp and I was informed that I would be on the next repat list to be sent home. It wasn't until early December that I was told to get ready to ship out. It was somewhat a disappointment, because I was being sent to the repat center at Stalag IV D Annaburg. We arrived at an old castle and were to stay there until January when we were allowed to go for a walk once a week. When we heard of the German break through in the west, we were all in the dumps for we got word that Hitler had ordered all POW's to be executed. Our morale was at its lowest since we thought that by now we would be on our way home.

Just before Christmas the guards allowed us to bring back a Christmas tree. We made paper decorations for the tree and it put us in the Christmas spirit. Some of the fellows made home-brew from our food parcels. An English Captain had a still, set up somewhere in the castle, and distilled our home-brew. We all had a drink for the Christmas season.

Finally around the middle of January, we were put on a hospital train for Switzerland. We were given some Limburger cheese, black bread, and sausage for the trip. At the station, we saw some Polish kids running around. As none of us liked Limburger cheese we gave it to the kids. Some of the fellows told the

kids to curse Hitler. We had a good laugh watching the guards chasing the kids. It took us two or three days to get to Lake Geneva, Switzerland. We did a great deal of going forward and then backward, because the rails had been bombed out. On the first day we came to a marshalling yard and our car was put in the round house for repairs. At noon the air raid alarm sounded, and American fighters were swooping all around the yards, but they did not attack us since they saw the red cross markings on the car. On the third day we arrived at Lake Geneva and were free at last. After a day in Lake Geneva we were sent to Marseille, France and put aboard a hospital ship to await the arrival of the Gripsholm for the trip home. We all looked like skeletons and I weighed just a little over 100 pounds. We received the necessary medical attention and the food was great. A few days later, the civilian ship (Gripsholm) arrived and we were transferred to it. We were assigned our own cabins and allowed to wander around and sit on deck. We had our meals in the dining room and were served by waiters. The bar was opened twice a day and we were able to purchase drinks, since we had received some back pay. Some of the fellows passed out after a few drinks. We arrived in New York around Washington's birthday. It was quite a thrill to see the Statue of Liberty, and at last be home. At Holleran General Hospital, on Staten Island, they fed us steak dinners and wine. At the hospital, some of the fellows conned the nurse to sneak some whiskey in to celebrate.

From there I went to Hadden Hall in Atlantic City, New Jersey for a revision of my amputation. I stayed there until I recovered and was discharged on October 12, 1945."

Lt. Bates was awarded the Silver Star, posthumously, for his gallantry and devotion to duty. The following is the NARRATIVE STATEMENT for this award:

█ "Lieutenant Cecil R. Bates was the aircraft commander of Nobody's Baby, a B-24. On 7 August 1944, the assigned target was Blechhammer Oil Refinery in Germany. Lt. Bates was flying in the number five position in the lead box of the formation. Immediately after bombs away the aircraft received a direct hit between number 3 engine and the cockpit. The copilot and the top turret engineer gunner were both badly wounded if not killed by the blast. The aircraft was thrown out of control, since the copilot was flying it on the bomb run, and it was immediately engulfed in flames.

Despite these difficulties, Lt. Bates regained control of the aircraft, and as attested to continued in formation despite the fact that by then the flames engulfed the entire plane. He had sounded the alarm bell and ordered the crew to bail out. The three crew members in the nose, the navigator, bombardier, and the nose turret gunner, all exited the aircraft via the flight deck and all three attest to the fact that both the top turret gunner and copilot were severely wounded if not killed and that Lt. Bates was still holding the plane in a stable position in order for his crew to

bail out successfully. There can be no doubt that he could have bailed out himself and saved his own life despite the fact that his clothing was on fire. He remained with the aircraft, and according to the German records, his body was found in the wreckage which means he stayed at his post and apparently attempted a crash landing. This was the only means of saving the top turret gunner and the copilot if they were still alive.

It is clear Lt. Bates heroism and professional skill made it possible for the seven survivors to bail out successfully, and it is also vividly apparent he continued to stay with the aircraft after the seven bailed out and that he refused to follow them. The only logical explanation for such gallantry would be he believed that either one or both might still be alive and the only conceivable means of saving their lives would be to crash land the aircraft and evacuate them on the ground.

The professional competence and aerial skill in controlling the aircraft to enable the seven survivors to bail out, together with the gallantry and devotion to duty in the dedication of his service to his country and to his crew members, reflects the greatest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

There was no such thing as a typical bombing mission; however, all missions would follow, with variations in targets, most of the following scenario:

The day would start with Sgt. Walker making the wake up call at about 0230 to 0330 hours. After breakfast all of the flight crew members, with the exception of the engineer, would attend a briefing at Group Headquarters. The briefing was given by various members of the staff and began with identification of the target for the day. The Group Intelligence Officer would tell where to expect the worst concentration of flak and enemy fighters. The pilots were given their assembly points over the Canosa area, the heading they would fly over the Adriatic Sea, the location of the target, and the location of the I.P. A meteorologist provided the latest weather forecast. Chaplain H. R. Blouch then usually said this prayer: "*O God, Thou who hast created the heavens and the earth, and in Thy natural law hast made it possible for man to sustain himself in flight through the air; we ask again Thy blessing upon these men as they go out this morning to fly high into the sky — grant them courage to do a good job, protect them against the assaults of the enemy, and may their faith be unfaltering in Thee. We pray it so in the name of Him who has given us power over all the things of the earth; the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.*" Amen.

The crews were then dismissed to get on the trucks which took them to the flight line.

The ground crews had been working most of the night to make sure the planes were ready for the mission. The crews had loaded the planes with eight to ten 500-pound general purpose bombs, some 4,200 rounds of

50-caliber ammunition stowed at the various gun positions on board, where the belts fed into metal chutes leading to the ten guns. They had also fueled each plane with approximately 2,700 gallons of 100-octane gasoline.

While the rest of the crew was attending the briefing, the engineer was checking the plane. Before he started the four engines, he hand-pulled each propeller through four revolutions to clear the cylinders of any oil that might have accumulated. After starting each of the four engines, he would run them up through the various rpm checkpoints to assure they were in good condition for the mission ahead. He would then check the flight controls, and in general try to find if there was anything wrong with the plane.

When the rest of the crew arrived at the hardstand, where the plane was parked, everyone made last-minute preparations for the mission, such as loading all extra armor-plate and/or flak suits around their positions. They used any type of armor plate they could get their hands on.

Around 0600, a flare would rise from the control tower — the signal to start the engines. The pilot, copilot, and engineer proceeded through the starting checklist. The copilot actuated the starter switch. The propeller of number 1 engine, farthest one out on the left wing, would whine slowly through the first few revolutions. Suddenly the engine would cough and the blades of the propeller would start to turn faster and faster until the engine smoothed out at idle speed. One at a time the other three engines were started for the second time the morning of each mission, and the pilot was ready to taxi to the runway. In a short while another flare would arch from the tower — the order to taxi to the runway. The signal was given for takeoff and, with engines laboring, the plane would slowly lift off the runway and gain altitude. The plane rocked and jumped across the propwash wakes left by other B-24's that had taken off at 30-second intervals before. To the crew, it seemed to take forever to form the Group and then the Wing formation prior to heading to the target.

As the formation climbed out over the Adriatic, the order was given to load and check the guns. (On one occasion, the left side gun started firing as soon as the cartridge entered the chamber of the gun. The gunner did not have a good grip on the gun when it *ran away*; it put some twenty holes in the vertical stabilizer before it could be stopped. (It was later learned this accident occurred because the gun safety switch was put in the safety position with the trigger depressed.)

As the plane climbed through 10,000 feet everyone put his oxygen mask on and plugged in his electric suit. At the final altitude of 21,000 to 23,000 feet, the temperature would fall as low as minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit. As the target was approached, the bombardier would check his bombsight and see that all bombs were armed. The flak increased in intensity and accuracy guided by the radar-directed batteries of antiaircraft guns which threw up barrages of flak so thick that hardly a plane could emerge totally

unscathed. Some would not emerge at all. During the bomb run, the pilot must hold the plane straight and level. He could neither change course nor altitude — the planes were sitting ducks for the enemy gun crews and their radar-directed guns below.

The bombardiers took their cue from the Group leader. When he dropped his bombs they dropped theirs. The tight formation ensured a dense pattern on the ground. After *bombs away*, the formation made a steep turn and headed for home hoping to clear the flak area as soon as possible. No one relaxed yet, for the Focke-Wulf 190's and the Messerschmitt 109's were waiting for any stragglers that might have been crippled by flak so they could finish the kill.

The planes that made it back to Pantanella were once again taxied back to their assigned parking apron and the flight crew deplaned to await the truck that picked them up and took them to the debriefing room. The Red Cross girls waited at their club mobile with donuts and coffee. This was a very welcome sight for a bunch of nearly exhausted men who had spent some seven to nine hours in the air. Each man was also allotted two ounces of liquor upon the return from each mission.

The ground crews took over the airplanes and gave them a thorough inspection. They patched the holes resulting from flak bursts, and they checked and repaired any damage to the engine, hydraulic and electrical systems, and flight control system. Many of these men worked most of the night getting the plane ready for the next mission. After they were well along with their work, the armament crews again loaded the plane with the type of bombs that had been selected for the next mission. They checked all guns and reloaded ammunition in each gun position.

Without the excellent support of the ground personnel, the superior results of the 783rd Bomb Squadron could not have been achieved. The dedication to duty of these men was far beyond that expected of them. They distinguished themselves as outstanding professional military men.

Ground Personnel

■ Lt. Col. William F. Day, Group Commander

"To the ground personnel must go credit for the part they played so well, for besides the good record against the enemy, the Group has maintained its enviable safety record so well established in the early days of training. Almost 10,000 hours of training were flown without accident. The group has the best safety record in the 15th Air Force and not one fatal accident has been traced to maintenance."

Some of the fellows responsible for the fine maintenance record were:

Line Chief	Mack C. Whitaker
Flight Chiefs.....	William P. Ewaski
Crew Chiefs	Murdock E. Lennon
	Kenneth A. (Chick) Marohn
	Aldur (Swede) Fargerlund
	Raymond A. Benson
	Dick Grout
	Rex Yeadon
	Dennis L. Spencer
	Wilton E. Spradley
	Gerald P. Pinten
	Lucky Mackey
	Angelo P. Gainino
	Lester E. Schwartz
Instruments.....	Earl C Aardal
	Edmon Ayers
Electrical	Joe Einecker
	Leo A. Wozniak
Inspectors	Sam Patera
	Silas E. Snelling

Mission number 59 was flown on 9 August to Budapest, Hungary. The target was the marshalling yards and the flak in the area was very heavy, but there were no fighters and we lost no planes.

The next four missions were to Southern France where we bombed the German gun positions and a bridge, which spanned the Rhone River, in support of the upcoming invasion by the Allied Forces. Even though we were routed around the "big show", we could see convoys of boats and ships as they approached the coast of Southern France in preparation for the invasion. The invasion took place in the early morning of 15 August.

The weather was very hot at Pantanella during the middle of August. Many of the flight crew personnel were sick and a lot of them were sent to the hospital. Many of the healthy guys flew on all the missions to Southern France. These were very long and tiring missions and the crews were glad to get a few days rest after the invasion was launched.

Mission number 64 was flown on 16 August to Friedrichshafen, Germany where we bombed the Ober-Raderach chemical works. All other Wings that flew today went to Southern France. Our Wing had excellent fighter cover — some 150 P-38's and P-51's provided the cover for us. Each plane carried ten 500-pound composition B bombs which were dropped from an altitude of 20,200 feet — approximately 45 percent of the bombs were in the target area. The flak was moderate but very accurate — four planes from the 465th Group were crippled and went to Switzerland.

The mission on 18 August was the last mission the 783rd flew to Ploesti and first mission in which only one complete original crew of the 783rd participated. Flak was intense, but due to the altitude of 25,000 feet there were no losses. Our bombs had finally destroyed the oil and gasoline production capabilities at the Ploesti oil fields and the refineries located in that area! Out of the seven missions that the Group flew to Ploesti, the author was on four of them.

On 20 August, our target was an oil refinery at Czechowice, Poland. Each plane carried ten 500-pound general purpose bombs which were dropped from an altitude of 20,000 feet. The Wing ahead of us did an excellent job on another target in the area. The smoke from their target had reached 20,000 feet by the time we were over our target. The results of our bomb drop were also excellent — approximately two-thirds of the bombs were in the target area. This was a very long mission — we were within thirty miles of the Russian battle line. Lt. Brown's crew celebrated Sgt. Gumm's completion of fifty missions by getting him drunk and dressing him in a sailor suit, then putting him to bed. Sgt. Gumm was the first enlisted crew member of the 783rd to complete fifty missions (according to the records available to the author).

The 783rd lost no planes or crews during the next three missions. The target for mission number 70, on 24 August, was an oil refinery near Pardubice, Germany (formerly Czechoslovakia). Lt. Kara's account of this mission:

■ "Very long and hazardous mission — on the way up nothing happened. Just off the target, fifty ME-109's jumped our Wing, concentrating on the 464th Group. I saw three B-24's shot down. One of them happened to be "Blue E" from our Squadron with Capt. Clark and his crew which consisted of six men from Duckworth's crew plus Lt. Sheridan and Sgt. Trimmingham from Lt. Heim's crew. He lost an engine before the I.P. and dropped back, then cut across the target and joined the tail end of the 464th. The fighters attacked and shot them down. Five chutes were seen. Later, on the way back we passed too close to Steyer, Austria, and got into very accurate flak. One plane just behind us and leader of "D box" was hit directly on the right wing and blew up — no chutes were seen. As we were flying over the Adriatic, a plane ran out of gas and went down in the sea. Nothing was heard from the crew. All in all this was a very rough mission and I'm glad to be back."

As of this date, there are only two complete original crews left in the Squadron — they are Ellis' and Kara's.

Some of the original crew members completed their fifty missions during the month of August and a few were on their way back to the States. We lost no more planes or crews during the next five missions. During the last eleven days of the month, the Squadron flew ten consecutive missions. The 783rd has twelve crews (121 men) M.I.A. during the

past 116 days of combat. One of the original crew finished their fifty missions intact — Capt. Kara and his crew flew fifty missions and the ten original members came through the ordeal unscathed.

During the month of August, the 15th Air Force Report shows the 465th Group with a 75 percent average bomb drop in the target area. Our Group leads with the 460th in second place. This is the best average attained in the 15th Air Force. The report had many favorable comments on the 465th Group.

A Mission

■ Fred Johnson

"On September 2, 1944, we had gone through the routine preflight of the airplane "Blue T" with everything checking out well. The crew chief did inform us, however, that the carburetors on engines number 3 and number 4 had been replaced during the night and that both engines checked out OK. The engines performed normally through our start-up and then through the take-off.

As our Squadron box was forming en route to the rendezvous area, our number 4 engine began running very roughly. We were unable to get it to smooth out and to develop any power so we feathered the prop and started to turn back to the field. In the meantime, number 3 engine began to act exactly as number 4 had and we were forced to feather its prop too.

With a full load of gasoline and bombs we were beginning to lose what little altitude we had. By the time the safety wires in the bombs had been rechecked, we were forced to use the emergency handle in the cockpit to jettison the bombs. The bombs tore through the the bomb bay doors leaving them hanging down, creating more drag than the weight of the bombs.

It was obvious that we were not going to make it back to the field and we were to low to try to jump. We were on our crosswind leg at treetop level in the river valley west of the field trying to reach a wheat field just beyond a bluff above the river. Just as it appeared that we were going to fly into the bluff, we dropped full flaps which ballooned us up and over it. We immediately dropped the landing gear which, although not completely down, did take the initial impact as we flopped down into the wheat field. With the switches cut, we slid along filling the plane with dust, which, with the sun shining through it made our plane appear to be on fire. Luckily it wasn't and when I reached the top hatch I saw the most beautiful picture I'd ever seen — all nine of the crew were running across the field away from the potential explosion which never occurred".

There were no planes or crews lost on the next three missions. Mission number 81 was to

Munich, Germany, on September 12, 1944. The flak, as usual, was intense and accurate. We lost one plane and crew over the target. Four of the crew members were killed. The 783rd has lost thirteen planes and crews in combat since May 29, 1944.

Mission #81, 12 Sept 1944

Hausner's Crew

Al Honey

"Lt. Hausner's crew for this mission was composed of nine of the ten men who left the States together. The ball gunner, Relaford W. Stuart, was ill that day. He was replaced in the ball turret by me (Honey). I was replaced in the nose turret by Donald Ruffalo. I don't know what crew Ruffalo was normally assigned to. At least I can't remember, if I ever did know.

The briefing was for Wasserburg, a small city that had a factory important enough to justify an air strike. The flak briefing was for moderate, accurate flak of heavy caliber. No fighters were expected. The time in flak was predicted as short.

The trip to the target was uneventful. I felt strange, riding the ball turret. It was a lonesome place to be and not as comfortable as the nose turret that I had grown used to. I couldn't see much from down there either. Just straight ahead through the "bull's eye," a two inch thick glass in the front of the turret. I was glad the target wasn't some place like Vienna.

As we passed the IP the flak began — no where near as intense as it had been over Vienna two days before, but very accurate. I could hear the "whump" as those 88s burst near us. We were taking hits.

Somewhere over the target a small piece of something, a shell fragment from an 88 I think, came through the plexiglass on the right side of my turret and gashed my nose before passing out through the left side of my flak helmet. It wasn't much, a nick in the flesh between my eyes.

Later, south of the Alps I asked for and got permission to leave my turret. I was told to clear the guns and to retract and secure the turret to reduce drag. For sometime before I left my turret I had been hearing a constant exchange on the intercom between the pilot, the engineer, and the navigator about high fuel consumption and the need to reduce power, drag, and altitude. A fuel cell had been "holed" by flak — we were losing gas.

The pilot asked the navigator for a shorter course for home. The pilot was also giving some instructions to the radio operator. The intercom was in constant use by those concerned with getting us home. The rest of the crew kept an interested silence. The conversations on the intercom were taking a very serious turn. I was

becoming concerned about our chances. Saalfeld, the radio operator, had made contact with some of our fighters who were in the area because sixteen P-38s were flying above us until we were well south of the Alps where they had to leave us. We were on our own from there on.

We came down the south slope of the Alps, heading toward the flatter land of the Adriatic coast, losing altitude. He was hoping to find a "strip of beach" long enough for us to land on. All this time Brown was making constant checks on our fuel supply and reporting every few minutes to Lt. Hausner. Nobody was getting jumpy.

We knew our lot was in the hands of two capable men, the pilot and the engineer. No one else except the radio operator could do anything that would help us. By this time we were approaching the east coast of Italy, heading for the nearest point within our lines.

Lt. Deegan, the bombardier, came back to the waist. He didn't seem worried. He told the four of us in the waist to be ready to bail out if the order should come from Lt. Hausner. The bell would be sounded twice if we were to go. Once that signal came we were to bail out with no delay. Lt. Deegan said that when he left the flight deck we were down to three hundred gallons on the sight gauges. Not very much gas for a B-24.

Lt. Deegan's news about the state of our fuel supply and his instructions to prepare to bail out did nothing for our state of mind, which now became tense. I didn't relish the thought of being blown by the strong wind into that angry looking sea.

By now the bomb bay doors had been opened and I could see Brown at the forward end of the bomb bay with F.O. Smith right behind him. Smith was pushing on Brown's shoulder and motioning him out the open bay. Brown jumped, followed at once by either Smith or Saalfeld. From the waist we saw three men leave the airplane. Lt. Deegan tried to reach the copilot via intercom. All four engines were running rough and beginning to misfire. Deegan tried to get response from the copilot several times; he looked at us, shook his head negatively, and ordered us to bail out. Davis and then Bradford went out the escape hatch. Now it was my turn. As soon as I saw that the canopy of my chute was all right, I tried to "slip" it up-wind because I could see that I was rapidly being blown out to sea. My attempt could not overcome the drift to seaward, but I knew that it would increase the rate of my descent and so lessen the distance that I would drift off shore. A very lucky thing for me as it turned out. Some Italians on the shore saw me go in about three or four hundred yards from the shore line.

During my descent I took time to unsnap the leg straps of my parachute harness,

then the snap securing the strap across my chest was unfastened, carefully this time; I didn't want to fall out of my harness. I was perfectly safe from falling out so long as I kept one arm across my chest, clutching the vertical strap on the opposite side. I discovered I could still "slip" my chute to one side while in this position.

During my descent I could see a parachute in the water with what looked like a body still attached to it. The body was floating almost vertically, but low in the water. The head was forward, the face in the water.

About two hundred feet from the water, I stopped slipping my chute and it steadied. I was soon aware that I was being blown sideways out to sea at a hell of a rate. The last hundred feet or so of any parachute jump seems to come with a great rush. I knew about this phenomenon and was prepared for it. When I realized the rush had begun, I threw up my arms to fall clear of the chute harness. I was still in it when I struck the water. The wind-blown parachute bounced me across at least two wave crests before I was completely free of it and started to sink. I inflated my Mae West and popped to the surface.

I reached for my packet of sea marker. The sea marker just wasn't there! I would be very hard to see from the air without the sea marker. I started to swim, using a crawl stroke. No good! I was too high in the water and could make no head way against the wind and the heavy waves. I carefully let some of the air out of my "Mae West" so that I would be lower in the water. I next threw away my pistol and took off my shoes. I tried swimming again, using a slow breast stroke. Again, no good! I was soon nearly exhausted from the effort of swimming, and I could see that I was losing distance. I stopped swimming and let the sea take me where it would.

The receding shore line showed that I was rapidly being carried seaward, which didn't alarm me too much in itself; the farther out I was, the longer I would be in the sunlight and more visible to anyone searching from the air.

Now to boost my hopes a Catalina PBY, an amphibian flying boat from Air Sea Rescue appeared on the scene and started flying a search pattern. But he was miles out from me. I didn't despair, thinking that he would soon work into shore and spot me. He didn't seem to be coming any nearer — getting farther out if anything. The PBY was circling Brown — it was giving surface rescue craft a fix on Brown. It then came to pick me up. My hope started to ebb rapidly away. I knew that if I wasn't picked up very soon it would be all over. The beating waves were fast doing me in. I was nearly spent. When I faced away from the wind the wave crests would throw me forward into the trough. When I faced into the wind, each wave crest hit me full in the face. If I turned sideways it was even worse. It

was like being beat about the head and face with a board. I was chilled through now too. I was having trouble holding my head up. Then I heard something. It sounded like a shout. I didn't dare to believe it, but I listened. It was repeated.

Then I saw the brown head and shoulders of a man across the wave tops. He saw me too and waved to someone on the now faraway shore. As the man came nearer to me, I could see that he was standing in a small boat, paddling it with a piece of board. The man turned to face the shore and waved the board over his head. Someone on the high ground of the shore had apparently been guiding him to me. The boat was very small and made of scrap wood, but it looked finer than anything I had ever seen.

The man let the wind blow the boat to me. As it came up to me, he went over the side, grabbed me, and somehow heaved me into the boat where I lay face down. At once I got sick, wrenching violently. I had swallowed a lot of sea water and that along with the nervous let down made me very ill.

By the time the Italian reached me in the small boat the question of the missing sea marker had become moot. The wind had blown me nearly two miles from where I would have used it. The sea marker wouldn't move as I had.

As I lay face down in the bottom of the little boat, the waves kept tossing it about and I kept getting sicker. The Italian hung on to one side of the boat, which steadied it some — but not much. Sometime during my wrenching, my nose started bleeding again. I could see the blood dripping into the bottom of the boat, bright red in the rays of the setting sun. I didn't care.

By now the circling PBY had noticed the action on the surface. The boat was a lot easier to see than a floating man. The Catalina approached us, circled, and flew a mile or so out to sea, turned into the wind and lit, coming straight for us. As the plane approached, it was rocking heavily from side to side. The pilot cut back his throttles and the big plane let us drift toward it. Our little boat was drifting right under one of the wing floats which lifted high out of the water, then came down right across the little boat and my back. It made kindling of the boat and hurt my back painfully.

A sergeant was at an open blister in the hull of the PBY. He had a long boat hook, and with it he quickly snagged me and pulled me aboard. The Italian swam to the hull of the PBY and hung there grasping the landing wheel retracted into its side. I had been in the sea for more than three hours.

The Italian and I were stripped and wrapped in warm blankets. I retrieved my rip cord from the pocket of my flight jacket and held on to it. The medic laughed at

this. He then filled two cups from a bottle of Lemon Heart rum, which was plainly labeled as one hundred forty proof. He offered a cup to each of us. I couldn't drink anything with my stomach still upset from all the sea water I had swallowed, but I kept the coffee cup of rum in my hand. The Italian tasted his and smiled and started to drink it. He gasped a couple of times, but put that rum away like a man. He smiled again and made that peculiar Italian gesture of twisting his forefinger in his cheek that means very, very good. I offered him my cup of rum. He took it and drank it with pleasure. I shouldn't have done it. In no time my friend was as drunk as the proverbial skunk.

As this was transpiring we were taxiing out to sea. The PBY turned into the wind and, after a long and very rough takeoff run, we lifted off and started a shallow turn to the right. Our takeoff must have taken us over the area where it had all been happening, because one of the waist scanners suddenly reported seeing a body in the water still attached to a parachute. We circled it low and slow, and a smoke bomb was dropped to guide a surface craft to the scene.

The A.C. came back to apologize for running over me and wrecking the Italian's boat. He told me then that the wind was blowing straight off shore at thirty-five knots — marginal for a PBY. He said we would be at Foggia Main in minutes and that two ambulances would meet us; one was to take me to the military hospital, and the other to take the Italian to his home village. He also said that it was policy to report all heroic acts by civilians in saving Allied lives; he was going to make such a report in this case. The ambulance driver would be charged with the duty of getting the man's name, address, etc. on a form that would go forward to the Fifteenth Air Force with the A.C.'s report on the incident. It made me feel good to hear this. I hope my rescuer was rewarded as well as whoever it was who helped guide him to me.

We soon landed at Foggia Main where I was helped out of the PBY, put on a stretcher, and into one ambulance for the ride to the hospital. The Italian tried to get out of the plane by himself, but he promptly fell on his face. That rum was too much for a man not used to it; two cups on an empty stomach could put anybody down! When I last saw him, he was gaily waving to me while some medics heaved him aboard the other ambulance for his ride home. I have often wondered about his arrival in his village. Whether he had a wife who demanded an explanation for how he paddled out to sea and returned in a Yankee ambulance, "knee-walking" drunk, having lost his boat. I know I shall never forget that brave, smiling man. I know he won't forget either, especially that rum. His return home must have been a riot. I would have given a lot to see it.

At the hospital they checked me quickly, put me to bed, and gave me a shot. Before I dozed off, a beautiful blonde appeared at my bedside carrying one of

those Red Cross ditty bags that they gave to all incoming patients. I must have stared. "Are you Sgt. Honey?" she asked with a lovely, cultured British accent. I must have nodded or said something, because she went on to tell me what a sweet name I had been blessed with. I think I just stared in limbo, feeling I should know her because she looked so familiar. Then she told me she was Madeline Carroll, the English actress, whose husband, Sterling Hayden, was a Lt. Col in the Marine Corps. He operated a fleet of small schooners out of Bari, supplying the Yugoslav partisans.

While Miss Carroll was at my bedside a medic "Pfc" appeared. He loudly announced that I should have left my barracks bags at the patients' supply room in the basement. I told him I didn't have any barracks bags or clothes either. He insisted, saying that nobody could enter that hospital without his barracks bags. I told him that I had just found a way to do it — now to get out and leave me be! He still insisted — a real one-track mind.

Miss Carroll had heard enough, she took his arm, pushed him out the door, and closed it behind him. She turned back to me, saying something about all armies having such types. She told me if I needed anything to get word to her in the Red Cross office, smiled, and left.

The next day during the doctor's rounds, I was read some orders and presented a Purple Heart. I remained in the hospital about two weeks.

I learned that of all the men in the ward, I was the only combat casualty. The other patients were the victims of accidents or V.D. The latter patients each received a shot of penicillin every four hours until sixty-four shots had been given. One man in a bed near mine was due for his last shot. As the time drew near we took my brand new Purple Heart and pinned it to the hem of his pajama top and hung it down between his buttocks. It looked beautiful hanging there. We carefully replaced his pajama bottoms over the medal, climbed on to our beds, and waited for the nurse to come with her needles.

When the nurse entered the ward, the men were nearly strangling from choking off their laughter. She reached our man, flipped the cover back with her needle poised to strike, pulled the man's pajama bottoms down, and stopped dead staring in disbelief at that beautiful medal hanging over the patient's bare behind. Then she collapsed into laughter! She laughed so hard and so loud that Madeline Carroll, who was in the corridor, heard and came to see what was going on. She too cracked up. Everybody in the ward had a big laugh at the joke. I wonder if that patient ever got his last shot — an interesting speculation. The interesting final line is that within a few days the hospital grapevine had it that the Air Force was now awarding Purple Hearts for V.D. Well! Why not? Those men who

were chronic V.D. victims did show a certain valor in the pursuit of their dangerous pleasures."

Squadron mission number 82 was to Oswiecim, Poland, on September 13, 1944. The Squadron lost two planes on the mission. Here is an account of one of the crews that went down.

Mission Number 82

■ Weyland B. Feely

"At the briefing on September 13, 1944, we were told our target would be an oil refinery in Oswiecim, Poland; that the flak would be heavy and fighter opposition was unknown. The target was 75 miles from the German-Russian lines. We had a map to the target, but no maps from there on. We were in the lead ship which had radar installed in it. Our crew consisted of the Group Commander, Col. Clark, pilot; Capt. Duckworth, copilot; two navigators, two bombardiers, and five enlisted men. The radar ball took the place of ball turret so we did not have the ball turret gunner on the mission. All went well to the target. Our fighter escort was with us all the way to the target and we had no fighter opposition. We made our bomb run through heavy flak and had just dropped our bombs when all "hell" broke loose. Our right engine was hit by flak and was on fire. We started down at a very steep angle with the flames from the engine reaching past the tail turret where I was sitting. My parachute was laying about halfway between my turret and the camera hatch. Just as I reached for my "chute" the plane leveled off, the engine was "feathered" and the flames went out. The pilots did a wonderful job controlling the plane. I have thanked God many times that Col. Clark was the pilot that day. I don't think I would be here today if it were not for Col. Clark.

I don't know how much time passed as all of this was happening. But it didn't seem very long to me. And as I looked out, we weren't very far from the ground either. I looked up and could see the rest of the boys going home. We called our escort but they told us we were on our own as they could not leave the Group.

So we manned our guns, lowered landing gear, and headed for the Russian lines. If — as I am sure we did — we passed over the front lines we couldn't tell it as we saw no activity.

It seemed to me we flew along at about 1,000 feet, but it could have been more. We skirted around a couple of large air fields, because we didn't know where we were. We weren't looking for anymore flak or fighters!

We finally spotted three or four fighters in a small field, which we later

discovered was a potato patch. We strained our eyes looking for a red star. Then we saw them on the fighters. We shot some flares and braced ourselves for a landing. It was a small clearing with a small irrigation ditch across the middle. Again the pilots came through and made a walkaway landing. They shut the engines off, and we waited for further orders. It dawned on me that I was low on cigarettes — not counting on a one-way flight. We started digging up every butt we could find in the corrugated flooring.

We had quite a reception from men and women military personnel on a big flatbed model truck. Only one Russian driver could speak English. We boarded the truck, and were driven about five miles to a small village or farm. There were not many buildings. We were taken to a two-story house; upstairs we were shown very coarse straw mattresses about a foot thick where we would sleep.

We were told that we would eat at 6:00 PM. At that time were taken to a small family house where two tables were set up with benches on each side. On each table were cold cuts of meats and cheeses, also fresh vegetables, and all the vodka you wanted. Then came a big bowl of potato soup, followed by fried goose.

After we had finished dinner we went back to our quarters. Later in the evening they had a dance for us downstairs. There was an accordion player. The Russians showed us their dances, and we showed them how to jitterbug. Before it was over, every one was jitterbugging.

The next day (September 14) we walked around the area, sight-seeing and taking pictures. Jack Walters and I found this soldier who had a motorcycle with a sidecar. It looked like one they had used in World War I. It ran pretty good until Jack tried to go between two trees and didn't make it — too much vodka I think!

That night we went to an outdoor movie — *Chicago* with Alice Faye — in Russian. Some time during the movie all the lights went out. We could hear a plane overhead. They told us it was a German plane.

The next morning (September 15) they sent five of us out to cover the plane with camouflage netting. We had the same truck that had brought us in, but I do believe that the driver was taking his first solo. We were off the road more than we were on it. Three of us were standing in the back wrestling 55-gallon drums. We looked back and could see the plane behind us. We banged on the top of the truck until we got the driver's attention. We showed him the plane and convinced him that it was our destination. He spoke no English, and we later found out he was taking us to the front lines! We covered the plane and were taken back to our quarters.

The next day (September 16) we were picked up in a C-47 transport. We were flown right on top of the ground for 600 miles to Poltava, Russia, which was the shuttle base for the Eighth Air Force. Poltava was not a big town, but all of the stores and restaurants were closed or off limits to us. There was a large park where the old and the young met to pass the time of day or night.

We were given a B-17 to get us back to Italy. At first it was rumored that we would go back by way of Cairo and spend the \$48 in our escape kit. But later word came down that we would wait for the Eighth Air Force shuttle run. We would then join them and fly a mission coming back.

On September 19th we joined the Eighth Air Force and hit a target in Szony, Hungary, on the way back to Italy. We must have flown over every anti-aircraft gun between Russian and Italy!

And by the grace of God I made it!"

There were six more missions flown during the remainder of September. The 783rd lost two more planes in combat over Munich on September 22, 1944. By the end of September, the Squadron had lost seventeen planes in combat — two more than the total number of planes (15) the Squadron had when we flew the first mission on May 5, 1944.



CHAPTER IV

PREPARING FOR WINTER AT PANTANELLA

October 1944 saw virtually a complete turnover in personnel of the combat crew members. During the month many new members arrived from the States to take over. It was their heritage to carry on the splendid record and traditions which made this one of the outstanding heavy bombardment squadrons of World War II. An intensive training program was set up to give these new men the necessary experience and confidence to carry on the tasks assigned to the 783rd.

With the full realization that the Squadron was destined to spend the winter at Pantanella, winterization plans were started. Tufa blocks by the thousands were hauled; lime, sand, cement and other building materials were "procured." "Ligne," as the natives called lumber, was virtually nonexistent in Italy, so all winterization materials centered around the native-mined tufa, a sand-like substance cut from pits nearby. Some of the more fortunate, who could procure roofing materials, had small homes in process of completion as the month neared its close, while for most, tufa-rock walls were added to tents which, with the addition of wooden or cement floors and "home-made" stoves, spelled "comfort" for the approaching colder weather. With good weather continuing it seemed certain that the building program would be completed before the wintry blasts set in in earnest.

■Albert Lewis's Diary October, 1944

Today, October 25, blossomed out quiet and clear. It promised to be a day of good weather, but little excitement. But promises aren't always to be believed! The weather was okay but excitement was ample. I'll always remember this day as long as I live — for this was the day that my Army "home" burned down!

For the past few days we had been constructing a gasoline stove for our tent. We had a real good one and were justly proud of it when we had it finished. It worked fine, readily removing the prevalent dampness and chill from the tent. We had been very careful in erecting the gas pipe line and also the stove pipe to put to a minimum the fire hazards.

That morning after breakfast I turned off the gas because it was rather warm in the tent. Later I planned to install a better shut-off valve in the gas line. John Foran was to help me. In our work we spilled a little gasoline onto the floor. Before we realized what had happened the fumes of the spilled gas had ignited from the heat of the stove. While we were still slightly dazed by what had happened, more gas escaped from the line, rapidly spreading the flames. John grabbed for the pipeline and burned his hand. I stepped on a rubber connection to stop the flow, but my pants caught fire and I had to move away.

We put dirt on the flames only to have them come out more fiercely somewhere else. Our fire extinguisher made desperate but futile efforts to quench the blaze. A call had been put in for the fire truck by this time and we had started to remove some of our equipment.

It is hard to describe the feeling inside oneself when one is fighting a losing battle. All during the fire I kept saying to myself, "It can't happen to us," but all the time before my very eyes it was happening. It was only a matter of seconds till the tent itself was on fire and only a matter of minutes before it was completely consumed. The smoke was intense and we were nearly overcome trying to get equipment out. I was so excited that I hardly know what I was doing. A sort of nauseating hysteria gripped me. Billy Smith, John Foran, Raymond Husak and I plunged in and out of the flames trying our best to save as much as possible. The other four boys that lived in our tent were down on the line and little knew what was going on. Billy, John, and Ray certainly did a swell job retrieving what they could. The wind was blowing from the northeast so the stuff on the south side of the tent was hardly more than scorched. But on my side most of it was burned. In fact, there was little hope for saving any of Gibbons' stuff and little of Stan's and Husak's stuff. Their beds were in the center of the blazing inferno.

The tent was still blazing when the fire truck arrived. Hoses were unreeled and pumps turned on but no water came out. The fire personnel tinkered with the apparatus wasting precious minutes while we still dragged out charred blankets, cots, etc.

I don't exactly remember what happened after that. I guess I was stumbling around throwing stuff out of range of the flames. I felt sick and vomited once. Someone grabbed me and hustled me off to the dispensary where it was discovered I was burned in two places —on the right leg and left hand. My head ached severely from excessive smoke in my system. The medics bandaged me up and wanted to send me to the hospital. At this, of course, I balked. So I'm just on "quarters" or relieved from duty for awhile.

But I came back and helped the boys take count and get our remaining possessions in order. We got a tent (an old leaky one) and a few new cots from supply. Some the stuff we were able to repair —some was damaged too much. Supply helped us out some, as did many of our friends. Of course, there are items that are irreplaceable. Gibbons lost everything he owned. Guess none of the rest of us fared as badly as he.

We were rather crowded in that tent. We had three extensions on the old tent and also many improvements that we hated to see ruined. But no use crying over spilled milk. We might as well take it on the chin and get busy fixing up what we had. It would soon be winter and we had a lot to do."

Bad weather over target areas permitted only nine combat missions to be flown during October 1944, the fewest number for any month since becoming operational. No fighter opposition whatever was encountered, indicating how utterly impotent the once-famed Luftwaffe had become. Even though it was a light flying month as far as number of missions flown, it was a very bad month for the 783rd because we lost five planes and forty-nine men to flak over Blechhammer and Munich, Germany. Thirteen of those men lost their lives as the planes went down. Twenty-eight of them were taken POW and only eight made it back to Pantanella. Oil was Hitler's greatest need and it was being denied him to such an extent that the lack of it was slowly but surely losing the war for him. The continual hammering of Ploesti and the synthetic oil plants of the Reich was at last beginning to stifle all his mechanized equipment.

NEW PERSONNEL CARRY ON

Crew Number FI-AQ-12

■ James H. Dulitz

"Our crew was put together and trained as a crew at Westover Field, Massachusetts during the fall of 1944. We were originally a ten man crew, but went overseas minus a bombardier.

In November of 1944, we were given a new Ford built B-24L at Mitchel Field, New York which we ferried to Gioia, Italy via the North Atlantic route. We did fly direct and nonstop from Goose Bay, Labrador to Valley Whales due to favorable winds, thus eliminating stops at Greenland and Iceland for fuel. The flight from New York to Italy was relatively uneventful and the new B-24L was safely delivered to Gioia, Italy. We were immediately assigned to the 783rd Bomb Squadron.

Our entire crew flew together until the end of hostilities in Europe for a total of eighteen sorties and 118:15 combat hours. On occasions individual members of the crew did fly with other crews on combat missions, as was common practice with the 783rd Squadron. During combat, our crew never lost a B-24 or suffered any personal injuries. We did make an emergency landing in Yugoslavia in order to make repairs one time. Several times we came home with lots of flak holes in our plane (one with over 100 holes). Members of the crew did find holes in flight jackets and pants from flak, but no crew member got a Purple Heart (thank God).

After the War, our crew was given Blue-D (Southern Gal, Duckworth's original Plane) to fly home. The flight across the Atlantic to Bradley Field, Connecticut was good and without serious problems. **Southern Gal** ended as our Squadron supply and personnel ship. She had been stripped of all guns and could cruise a little faster than the conventional B-24. On our trip back one ATC C-54 crew was puzzled about why we were keeping up with them.

Upon reaching Bradley Field each crew member was granted 30 days leave with various orders to report for duty after the leave was over. Mine was for B-29 transition at Sioux Falls, South Dakota. However, after reaching Camp Beale near Sacramento, California on my way home, I was given a certificate of service. I have been a civilian ever since."

Fifteen missions were flown during the month of November 1944, bringing the total figure to 112 since entering combat. The following is the official account of mission number 110.

"BLECHHAMMER O/R MISSION #110, 20 NOVEMBER 1944

CONFIDENTIAL

**HEADQUARTERS 465TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
APO 520 U.S. ARMY**

20 November 1944

SUBJECT: Narrative Mission Report

TO: Commanding General, 55th Bombardment Wing (H)
APO 520, U.S. Army

1. Twenty-three aircraft of 27 scheduled took off at 0742 hours on 20 November 1944, to bomb the Blechhammer South Oil Refinery. The aircraft formed two attack units led by Lt. Col. CLARENCE J. LOKKER and Major WILLIAM K. ZEWADSHI.
2. The group assembly was accomplished in the usual assembly area at 0825 hours at 5,000 feet. The wing assembly was accomplished over Spinazzola at 0841 hours at 5,000 feet. An escort of P-38's intercepted the bomber formation at 1100 hours in the Lake Balaton area and a second escort called the bombers at 1200 hours near the target area and said that they were 10 minutes late but would make contact as soon as possible. This second escort joined the formation near the I.P. The escort left the bombers at 1500 hours near the coast of Yugoslavia.
3. One aircraft returned early. The nose gunner of this aircraft became ill and the group leader ordered that aircraft to return to base. The two delayed action bombs were jettisoned in the Adriatic at 42 30 N — 16 30 E and the other 6 bombs were returned to the base. The aircraft landed at 1115 hours.
4. Three single engine fighters with fixed landing gears were encountered by a lone aircraft in the target area at 1230 hours at 23,000 feet. These aircraft made an unaggressive pass from high at 6 o'clock in line astern and the gunners began to fire at them. P-51's came in at once and drove the attacking enemy aircraft away. No markings were visible and no claims were made. Two or 3 aircraft believed to be jet propelled, were seen at 1440 hours at 16,700 feet at 44 40 N — 16 26 E. Two parallel, intermittent vapor trails were seen coming from each aircraft. The vapor trails seemed to come out in short bursts or puffs. The aircraft were moving back and forth in a patrol-like fashion, at a distance, and made no attempt to attack the bombers. No markings were visible.

5. Flak at the target was intense, accurate, and heavy. The bombers did not rally as briefed due to the fact that the lead aircraft was shot down. As a result Able box was disorganized after bombs away. The lead aircraft of Baker box had its rudder cable destroyed by flak and was unable to make the turn off the target and the entire box flew through the main concentration of flak. This probably accounts for the crewmen's report that the flak was more intense and accurate than ever encountered at this target. The second attack unit rallied as briefed and did not encounter as much flak at the target as the first attack unit. The crews report that there were several barrages of rapid fire flak which they described as a series of about 14 to 16 almost simultaneous bursts at the rate of 2 bursts a second which suggests the possibility of multi-gun batteries.

6. Twenty-two aircraft went over the target at 1227 hours at 23,000 feet and dropped 44 tons of 500 RDX bombs (.IN & .01T fusing). As the formation approached the target they cut short of the I.P. at 22,200 feet and made a 360° turn and continued to climb to 23,000 feet, the briefed altitude for the attack. The formation leader called the 464th leader and told him of his plan to make a 360° turn but didn't give his reason for making it. Crew member assumed that it was to climb to proper altitude. As the formation started on the bomb run the leader of Able box was hit by flak and peeled out of the formation seconds before bombs away. It was apparent that he could not finish the run so Able 2, the deputy lead aircraft, piloted by Captain ARTHUR TENNILLE, took over and lead the group over the target. The smoke screen that was in operation obscured the target until the last 40 or 50 seconds. It is believed that a run was started by the lead aircraft, but the deputy bombardier who took over in the the last few seconds sighted the refinery through the smoke and was able to make a visual run although the briefed aiming point was not sighted. The second attack unit leader also bombed visually using A-5 pilot. The formation was only partially broken up despite two aircraft ablaze and falling apart and another badly damaged and falling out of formation. Photographs show that a few bombs fell in the refinery but most of them fell short and over, falling in a residential area and open fields. Crews report that bombs fell from the missing aircraft over the target.

7. Observations:

- a. Crews report M/Y at Czelldomolk (47 15 N — 17 09 E) full of freight cars.

8. Weather: 10/10a ST and SC tops 6,000 feet from South of Via to the Danube. Clouds becoming broken at 9,000 feet to the target where it was clear. High cirrus clouds all along route at 21-23,000 feet. Visibility 10-15 miles along route with light haze at target. Route back substantially the same.

9. Five aircraft attempted photos.

10. Nineteen aircraft landed at the base at 1630 hours. Three aircraft did not return, while the crew of a fourth bailed out over or near the spur. Aircraft #41-38853 piloted by the group leader, Lt. Col LOKKER, was destroyed by flak at the target when the aircraft burst into flames and the left wing came off. One chute was seen. Aircraft #42-51402 piloted by Lt. ERNEST R. TAFT, was destroyed by flak at the target and the aircraft burst into flames, went into a dive and blew up in the air. No chutes were seen. Aircraft #44-41142, piloted by Lt. JOSEPH NORMAN, was hit by flak at the target. Number 2 and 3 engines were smoking but the aircraft maintained flying altitude and headed East, presumably toward Russia. The pilot radioed that he was heading for the nearest safe area. It was last seen losing altitude rapidly, but apparently under control. Aircraft #42-51167 piloted by Lt. CAMPBELL, was hit by flak at the target, but made it to the spur where his crew bailed out, Lt. CAMPBELL and at least seven men were reported to have been located and safe at the time of this report.

11. The route was flown generally North of the briefed route but was South of the I.P. when a 360° turn was made to the North before bombing. The reasons for the variations are not known since the lead crew was lost (see par 6). Major ZEWADSKI, leading the second attack unit, rallied the group after leaving the target and flew the scheduled route back to base.

R. C. PEASE,
Major, Air Corps,
S-2"

For the third consecutive month, no enemy aircraft were encountered. A new combat technique was developed and tested during the month. Due to the seasonal weather it was becoming increasingly difficult to assemble and route a formation of bombers to any of the current targets. Rather than permit weather conditions to afford the enemy any respite, the Air Force made plans to send single airplanes, unprotected, whenever cloud cover or darkness would not permit the tactical use of formations.

Two volunteer crews from each Squadron were assigned the status of Night and Weather Crews. Training consisted of night takeoffs and landings, actual instrument practice, orientation in the radio and visual aids to night navigation available in this theater of operations. In preparation for the time when radar would be the only contact with the target, the bombardiers and "Mickeys" practiced dry runs on cities in the local area which, from the standpoint of radar, compared to the future targets in Germany and other enemy territory.

The two crews devoted the greater part of their combat time to these training missions. Briefing covered the possibility of meeting night fighters and flak, stressing the protection

of cloud cover from both. Being alone on the bombing run, the pilots would enjoy an unlimited use of evasive action. Probably the greatest single source of danger would be icing in the cloud cover necessary for protection from searchlights and enemy aircraft.

From the date of its inception this type of bombing had been considered a success, not in itself perhaps but in the way it would complement the tactical use of formations. Though the tonnage of bombs carried by lone bombing airplanes was naturally limited, their value in terms of damage to enemy morale was immeasurable. Interruption of enemy wartime activity would now occur at any time around the clock.

The Great Turkey Caper Thanksgiving Eve 1944

■ Al Honey

"Anyone who ever lived in the 783rd tent area will remember the jeep track that ran from the mess hall and operations tent, south past the E.M. Club to the last tent in the squadron area. I lived in that last tent. It housed the survivors from Hausner's crew plus some other loose "scrags." They were scroungers almost to a man. Some were specialists. I specialized in pork loin and eggs.

The 464th, a little farther up the hill to the west, lost a "put put" for our lights and some old oxygen tanks and tubing for our stove and shower. Bits of tent material kept turning up around our tent. It was always useful. We were honest scroungers. We never took anything found in our own tent area. But the other squadrons in our group, the ones that lived apart from us across the little valley and the 464th, were fair game.

Food was lifted from our own kitchen because I had made a point of making friends with the cooks. They were used to my being in and around the kitchen, always ready to give them a hand moving rations from the storage cellar to the kitchen, especially if it was fresh (frozen) pork loin.

All that I have described above led to the development of a singular, but odd attitude in the minds of the scroungers. We got to the point where we couldn't or wouldn't approach any normal need or event in a straightforward way. We just didn't trust the Air Force to fulfill our needs the way it was supposed to. We had become very self reliant "pack rats," always looking for some devious way to bring something off that would happen anyway if we just sat back and waited. We believed in one law — Murphy's.

That attitude is what led to the "great turkey caper" or, as known by a few, "the turkey trots." Just after noon on Thanksgiving Eve 1944, Harvey Nickles and I were sitting in our tent pessimistically exploring the probability that some "brass" would find a way to foul up the next day's turkey dinner for the air crews by dreaming up a hot mission to some distant and fearful target like Blechhammer, and maybe we would all return to nothing but leftovers. The ground echelon would be sure to eat up everything that was any good. We talked about the possibility of going to Vienna and coming back to a supper of cold Vienna sausages, thus adding insult to injury. The more we talked about it, the more self righteous we became.

I don't remember who started it — most likely it was Harvey Nickels, a born instigator. But we were soon discussing the possibility of filching a roasted turkey from the kitchen and having our own turkey dinner in our tent later that night. In

the meantime, one of Nick's former crew mates, a little Norwegian named Everett Trandem (we all called him Whitey) came in. He listened for awhile and then said he thought it was a great idea. Could he share it with us. "Sure," we said. "What can you bring?" He didn't have anything, but was welcomed anyway. He did help a little when he turned to me and suggested that I stop in the kitchen after the evening meal and "case" the situation. "The cooks know you," Whitey said. "They won't think anything of it if you stop and talk to them. Then you will see the best way to do it." A good idea! Owrie Brown listened but didn't say anything.

Before evening chow, I went to the E.M. Club and bought two liters of the Yugoslav brandy they used to mix drinks. When I went to chow I put them in the large pockets of my field jacket, just in case. While passing through the serving line I could see one of the cooks I knew in the back of the kitchen by the field ranges. On tables in front of him were piles of uncooked turkeys. The cook looked pale and unhappy. I called to him and asked him how things were going. "Not worth a damn," he replied, adding, "I have to work all night alone, cooking these turkeys. I said, "You don't look so good." The cook replied, "I was up all day when I should have been sleeping, playing cards, and drinking vermouth until about two o'clock. I slept some and now I have the "granddaddy" of all hangovers. I'm sick." Here was opportunity. I told the cook that I would try to find him a shot of something to help his hangover. He looked grateful and said, "If you can do that I'll dance at your wedding. I mean it."

After eating I went into the kitchen and slipped him the two liter bottles from my pockets. The cook squatted behind a field range, took a quarter of one bottle in one pull, grinned, and said, "Thanks buddy, that's a life saver." I said, "I'll see you in a couple of hours if you need any more." He smiled, give me a "high ball" salute and I left. In the tent I was asked how things looked. "Great!" I told them. An alcoholic cook with two liters of booze is alone in the kitchen, riding herd on all those turkeys. Who's going to help me?" There wasn't one volunteer. There were a couple of guests in the tent. I asked them for assistance. No one said a word until somebody said, "What do you need help for? You ought to be able to carry one turkey this far. You're the food merchant."

I could see that I would have to do it all alone or there would be no turkey that night. I tried again, explaining that I couldn't stand around in the kitchen and then just grab a turkey and run. The cook would have to see it. Drunk or sober! It would probably make him so mad that he would call the first sergeant or the adjutant or most likely both. The two of them were already suspicious that somebody was getting away with things from the kitchen. If they caught us with a "hot turkey," it would cast a pretty dim light on our future in the USAAF. Maybe even mean stockade time. I needed someone to stand outside the kitchen door out

of sight, where I could quickly pass a turkey to him; he could take off while I talked to the cook, leaving in a few minutes. Still no help. Now I had an idea. There was a demobilized Italian soldier doing odd jobs around our area. He always wore a long, loose "Italian army" overcoat. Just the thing. I would bribe him with some cigarettes, and he would carry the turkey to our tent hidden under his overcoat. It wouldn't be seen there even if somebody did happen to see us on our way to the tent. It should work just fine.

I found the Italian, showed him some cigarettes, and motioned him to come with me. He grinned and followed me to the kitchen. Once there I put my finger over my lips for silence, positioned the Italian just to one side of the door, and went in. The cook acted glad to see me. I asked him if he needed anything more. He replied that he could sure use another bottle of that brandy. I told him I would get him one and went out. I cautioned the Italian to stay put, and took off for the club and another bottle. That cook looked pretty "snockered" already, but I didn't have the heart to refuse him that last bottle and then steal his turkey.

I was back in minutes and again explained to the Italian by the use of silent pantomime what was expected of him. He nodded his understanding. I went into the kitchen and gave the cook his bottle. I was by the door, a pile of cooked turkeys on a table by my left hand. When the cook turned his back to go behind the ranges for a pull on the bottle, I grabbed the top turkey in the pile and shoved it out the door. The Italian grabbed the turkey and took off for our tent. The cook never noticed. I talked to him for about five minutes and left, making sure that he saw me leave empty-handed.

When I reached the tent the turkey was lying on its back on a metal sheet that we used to fry loin chops, atop a locker that we used for a table on such occasions. That bird looked so good, lying there all golden and shiny. Nickels was the self appointed carver. He had a pocket knife with a fairly long sharp blade. As he started to carve, Whitey kept reaching for a piece of turkey. Nick kept scolding him and whacking at Whitey's fingers with the knife. Finally Nick said, "Look, Whitey, if you just can't wait, take a piece and quit bothering me." Whitey took a piece and bit into it. He chewed a couple of times and stopped, sitting there looking at Nick who went on carving up the turkey. Whitey chewed his turkey a couple more times, stopped again, and looked around like he was looking for a place to spit it out. Nickels looked up at Whitey and said, "Look, Whitey, you wanted it so damned bad you couldn't wait for the rest of us, now eat it." Whitey swallowed his turkey, sat there for a minute or two, then said, "That turkey doesn't taste right." Nick said, "You have just been over here too long, Whitey." "No," Whitey insisted, "It just doesn't taste right. There's something wrong with it."

At this I took a piece of breast and put it in my mouth and began to chew. My

injured nose interfered some with my sense of taste. At first I noticed nothing amiss and continued to chew. I swallowed, then it hit me. The turkey tasted rotten. Everybody was watching me. I said to them, "Whitey is right. There is something wrong — it tastes awful." Just then Nickels started to swear. He swore at the Air Force, he swore at the cook, he swore at me for giving the cook too much booze. He swore at me again for bringing such an abominable piece of garbage into the tent. Why hadn't I inspected the turkey before I swiped it? My protest that I didn't have time to inspect went unheard in the diatribe Nick was delivering.

Then he stopped shouting and started to laugh. He said, "Do you know what that drunken bum of a cook did? He cooked that turkey with the guts in it." He added, "Honey probably saved that cook's hide by stealing it. It was probably the only one. They always gut them before they freeze them."

Nick was right. I had swiped what was most likely the only turkey in Italy that had been cooked with the guts in it, because it probably was the only turkey in Italy that had been frozen that way. Talk about odds. Thousands to one and we made it! Crime doesn't always pay. We did learn something from it. From then on we were careful.

Thanksgiving day just before noon we dug a hole behind our tent and gave the turkey a military funeral. That is, three of us did. We fired three volleys from our pistols and the whole ceremony was watched by members of Jones crew with bowed heads and crocodile tears.

Dick Snow wanted to know why no one said any prayers for the turkey, noting that the turkey was sure as hell one of a kind to have caused all that yelling the night before. Then Dick agreed with us that the bird was surely an atheist and there would have been no point in a religious service. Carney thought the whole discussion was a "sacrilegious outrage." He paid no heed to us. Orbin Rutledge said he was sorry such a fine scheme had turned so rotten. A pun from Orbin? In our own tent no one would talk about it anymore. The Italian who helped me would snicker whenever he saw one of us. Whitey and I each had a case of the GI trots for a few days. Or was it a case of "turkey trots" that we had?

So ended the 783rd's "great turkey caper of 1944." You just can't win them all."

The Squadron spent its first Christmas in the combat area and celebrated by featuring holiday entertainment at both clubs. The Quartermaster Corps came in for its share of commendation by providing a real holiday feast with turkey and all the trimmings. A few Christmas trees were secured to lend a bit of holiday atmosphere to the surroundings.

Just as the winterization program was completed the Squadron received additional personnel, necessitating a continuation of the program. With the increasing scarcity of materials and transportation, this presented a real problem but in a surprisingly short space of time the work was accomplished and by the close of the month most of the new personnel were comfortably quartered.

The Sixth War Loan Drive, which had been in progress since early November, 1944, came to an end on the end of the year. A real effort was made throughout the Squadron to lead all squadrons in the Air Force in the purchase of war bonds.

After an absence of three months the enemy managed to put some fighter opposition in the air, these being encountered on the mission of 6 Dec 1944 over Bratislava, Slovakia. As a result our gunners accounted for three ME-109's to increase their victories by that figure.

On 4 Dec 1944 the Group received a Presidential Unit citation for "outstanding performance during the intensive aerial campaign against the Axis oil and communication centers," particularly singling out the mission of 8 July 1944 when it successfully bombed the Florisdorf Oil Refinery and marshalling yards at Vienna, Austria. The citation was covered by Hq., AF General Order No. 4186, dated 26 Oct 1944. In the absence of General Twining, commanding the Air Force, Brigadier General Charles F. Born, accompanied by his staff, including Col. Charles A. Clark, Jr., our former Group Commander, made the presentation.

1945

January, 1945, proved to be the least active month in the history of the entire 15th Air Force, weather hampering aerial operations throughout the entire period. The month as a whole presented a dismal picture of snow on the ground and thick clouds over Europe, which held the Air Force to fewer operational days than in any previous month in its history. An important factor was the advance of the Allied ground forces to reduce the area subject to attack from Italian air bases. The result of this shrinkage of German-held Europe would be to increase the concentration of attacks on the part remaining. Because of this situation, the enemy could be expected to present a heavier concentration of ground defenses at these few remaining targets.

On 15 January 1945 the Squadron's long-standing safety flying record was finally ended, when one of the airplanes piloted by Charles W. Matzger crashed during a practice mission and all on board were killed. This was the first non-combat fatal accident to occur since the Squadron was activated, a truly remarkable record in itself.

The Squadron was able to fly only three combat missions during the month. We lost our Operations Officer, Capt. Arthur Tennille and crew when the plane he was flying crashed on the Isle of Vis on 20 January 1945.

It was expected that in the new year advanced bombing techniques and improved weather forecasting methods would assure maximum use of days when weather permitted operations. In addition, the development of radar would eliminate target weather as a factor in the success of a mission (except when so extremely severe as to prevent flying at heavy bomber altitude). Even when fair weather returned it was expected to play an important role because "Mickey," as this new radar device was known, could pierce clouds, smoke, or darkness to reveal a target and it was well known that the enemy resorted to the intensive use of smoke screens to conceal his installations.

The new year itself was ushered in with six inches of snow. However, the Squadron area was now virtually 100 percent winterized and consequently well able to withstand the elements.

Unlike January 1945, when but three combat missions were completed, a total of 20 missions was flown during February 1945. The Squadron lost "Blue R" plane flown by Lt. Lyons and crew on the mission of 16 February 1945 — target, Regensburg, Germany. There continued to be a lot of flak thrown at the planes. While the planes were pretty badly shot up, none was lost and all managed to return to the base, although considerably later than the remainder of the Group.

Morale remained at a high level, due to the unusually fine weather experienced, the

comforts in the field of a completely winterized area and the many improvements made in the messes, including the addition of a steam table, to say nothing of dishes replacing mess kits. The cooks were able to improve the quality of meals.

An intensive Information-Education program got under way, weekly discussion group meetings being held in the I-E room of the Enlisted Men's Club building. These discussions clarified such topics as the GI Bill of Rights and Postwar America.

Again in March 1945, twenty combat missions were flown with all airplanes returning safely, heaviest concentration being on the enemy's marshalling yards. The strategy of crippling the enemy's points of distribution was having its effect on his ability to resist the unrelenting Allied drives being made on both eastern and western fronts. Enemy aircraft opposition during the month was also absent.

The most outstanding feature of the month was the fall of Vienna. In connection with the fall of Vienna, it is of interest to note that on 22 March 1945, a few days before it fell, our Group bombed this target for the final time, being the last group to do so before its capture by the Russian armies. With the famed Ploesti oil fields in Rumania destroyed, Vienna was considered the most heavily defended target in all of Europe and its fall indicated the early completion of the mission of the Strategic Air Force in the European theater of operations.

The following list reflect only a part of the replacement flight crews for the 783rd Squadron. They are listed as the author received them, and do not represent the order in which they arrived in the Squadron at Pantanella. Some of the crews flew their planes from the States to Pantanella.

P-Lubie M. Roberson
Cp-William F. Rogers
N-William B. Downey
B-Joseph M. Casadevall
E-John W. McGuirk
R-Joseph E. Scherger
G-Willard D. Crary
G-Donald A. Dumas
G-Herbert J. Haskins
G-Lovis V. Weixelman

P-Golden N. Jones
Cp-James S. Hudson
N-Ralph R. Hollibaugh
B-Rudolph C. Hensen
E-Richard L. Snow
R-Kerry B. Carney
G-Alfonse J. Misuraca

P-Allen D. Fishback
Cp-John S. Biddle
N-
B-Sameul S. Bier
E-Orval E. Griffin
R-Edmund J. Miosky
G-William J. Wightman
G-Joseph E. Harrison
G-William S. Coburn
G-Robert F. Arnold

P-Roger L. Kraft
Cp-John N. Colman
N-Earl N. O'Brien
B-John Bistarkey
E-John Sangas
R-Brooks K. Truitt
G-William H Curry

G–Orbin E. Rutledge
G–Harold S. Barley
G–Elbert K. Strader

P–Herbert Parkison
Cp–Herbert W. Jester
N–James G. Ewer
B–Louis U. Dussault
E–Robert E. Riley
R–Vernon H. Buol
G–Richard A. Edmonds
G–Douglas F. Miller
G–Orville R. Olsen
G–Lawrence B. Thurston

P–William A. Miller
Cp–George A. Wynn
N–Kenneth R. Bassler
B–George W. Hayman
E–Alvin L. Musch
R–Harold N. Graham
G–Robert S. Denny
G–Thomas W. Moony
G–George F. Jaeger
G–George E. Tayler

P–Homer W. Lane
Cp–Marvin Tannenbaum
N–Marvin Guiffre
B–Eric W. Volkman
E–Stanley A. Phillips
R–William C. Prouty
G–William W. Willison
G–John Rj. Harlin
G–John R. Zacharias
G–Harry A. Beltz

P–James R. Curtis
Cp–Delbert E. Forsberg
N–Gorden H. F. Fowlie
B–Lyle H. Long
E–Richard K. Rutgers
R–Charles A. Mangan
G–Royal E. Edmark
G–William A. Marsh
G–Gerald L. Harris
G–Earl J. Werner

G–Robert E. Goldman
G–Joseph R. Horne
G–Leonard T. Rosen

P–George W. Williams
Cp–Gorden A. Grieble
N–Harry B. Greene
B–John D. Fritz
E–Everett T. Trandem
R–Austen F. Enzor
G–Perry J. Capps
G–Robert W. Ferrell
G–Donald F. Lafata
G–Harvey E. Nickels, Jr.

P–Harvey D. Wright
Cp–William Mitchell
N–
B–John K. Hartman
E–John F. McNamee
R–Robert H. Messinger
G–William T. Rutan
G–Zane D. Hoyle
G–Joseph J. Korf
G–Louis A. Rebottaro

P–Irving R. Stringham, Jr.
Cp–Brimhall, Delbert C.
N–Eugene C. Kipp
B–Edward J. Latimer
E–Natale A. Greco
R–Pasquale A. Gialo
G–Egbert E. Mead
G–James A. Ferguson
G–Albert J. Dyrda
G–William B. Gibhardt

P–Emil E. Waymon
Cp–John G. Knous, Jr.
N–George R. Cross
B–Collie E. Sheets
E–Dale D. Miles
R–Vernon L. Smith
G–Francis A. Kraemer
G–Hollis E. Payson
G–Joseph C. Forbes
G–Roy D. Fisher

P–Dean P. Evans
Cp–Gorden L. Edwards
N–Wilson L. Hatch
B–Melvin O. Roberts
E–Thomas R. Nunn
R–Wilford J. Corn
G–Robert A. Fenske
G–George B. Rhinevault
G–Charles A. Austen
G–Victor E. Pohlman

P–Harold F. Owens
Cp–Robert F. Wills
N–Lloyd R. Findlay
B–John D. Deplus III
E–Earl T. Behr
R–Thomas R. Curtis, Jr.
G–Hudson J. Davis
G–Edward E. McDonald
G–Charles E. Roberts
G–Robert B. Gordon

P–James C. May
Cp–Nicholas Rodak Jr.
N–Charles E. Riley
B–Daniel W. Pepper
E–Boyd K. Walker
P–William Lyon
Cp–William D. Wine
N–Leslie P. Turner
B–
E–Owrie V. Brown
R–Charles A. Mangan
G–Raymond J. Collins
G–Allen A. Honey
G–Herbert M. Gatling
G–David L. Busch

P–Hugh P. Thompson
Cp–Louis L. Rice
N–Joseph J. Treglia
B–Abraham Haber
E–James E. Odom
R–Louis J. Quaglietta
G–Harry J. Ganson
G–Bernard E. Shott

P–Ernest R. Taft
Cp–Thomas Pope
N–Erin J. Cole
B–Michael Kolago
E–Charlie C. Ritch
R–Charles F. Burda
G–Richard M. Balke
G–Robert H. Lowman
G–Richard H. Goldsworthy
G–Jack E. Cassady

P–Harold W. Shoener
Cp–Raymond W. Eberhart
N–Russell J. Aurentz
B–John N. Boeris
E–Theodore S. Puckett
R–Francis T. Mulrooney
G–John W. Barlett
G–Casimir J. Bidas
G–Fred Simpson
G–Howard W. Harvey

R–Ronald O. Traner
G–Daniel Volintine Jr.
G–John A. Daye
G–Joseph C. Whitacre
G–Harold R. Siner
P–James H. Dulitz
Cp–Thomas M. Fitzpatrick
N–Robert D. Dumas
B–
E–Constant O. Maffey
R–Edwin R. Keiser
G–Robert D. Lawsen
G–Linford C. Lavrack
G–James C. St Clair
G–Morton L. Gillespie

P–Forest L. Radcliff
Cp–William J. White, Jr.
N–Robert L. Bishop
B–
E–Carl W. Decker
R–Paul E. Dahlson
G–Earl E. Brooks
G–Henry L. Jones

G-Wayne D. Stanford
G-Steve J. Kotik

P-Charles W. Matzger
Cp-Gilbert H. Kauffman
N-Paul E. Pfalzgraf
B-Victor Hansen, Jr.
E-Alex J. Leslie
R-Richard L. Wise
G-Elbert L. Scroggins
G-Verlin S. Williams
G-Raymond C. Wolfording
G-

P-Sigmund E. Hausner
Cp-William D. Wine
B-Orville J. Deegan
N-John R. Smith
E-Owie V. Brown
R-Harold Saalfeld
G-Donald Ruffalo (replacement)
G-Benjamin J. Davis
G-David D. Bradford
G-Allen A. Honey

P-J. P. Butt
Cp-K. L. Holl
N-S. Velinsky
B-C. G. Thyberg
E-C. E. Hart
P-Buddy Cramer
Cp-Norman Lund
N-Carl Lind
B-
E-Izzy Gertsner
R-John Marshall
G-Mitchell Guziejka
G-Ben Dubose
G-Mike George
G-Al Wyle

P-Lary G. Decrow
Cp-David Reeher
N-Joseph P. Kutger
B-Carl L. Milburn

G-Louis J. LeDuc
G-Kevin B. McCabe

P-James M. Cox
Cp-James Atherton
N-James H. Kyes
B-Kenneth Russel
E-Glenn A. Jones
R-Donald Schuster
G-William B. Irick
G-Jack L. Thornton
G-Vance V. Beatty
G-Jacob M. Putnam

P-Fred Johnson
Cp-Larry Seigler
N-Jack Meyer
B-Don Kay
G-Otto Sachs
R-Sarkis Samargian
G-Jimmy Henry
G-Paul Roberts
G-Jimmy Tuccio
G-Claude Sprecker

R-L. M. Everett
G-N. MacIntyre
G-W. F. Thornton
G-H. J. Bobrowiecki
H. R. Grimm
P-George B. Josten
Cp-William A. Bolin
N-Daniel S. Lucey
B-James A. Lawton
E-Edmund S. Pereira
R-Doyle Mayo
G-Armand J. Bastin
G-Ted Lafave
G-James T. Harp
G-Ira S. Altizer

P-Paul A. Cella
Cp-Joseph A. Hoffman
N-William Edwards
B-George H. Bevington

E–J. Paul Tobin	E–Harold L. Winters
R–Jack Rapkin	R–Ernest Brink
G–Clarence C. Owens	G–Fred W. Christie
G–David Busch	G–James A. Spradley
G–James A. Bourne	G–Harold E. Walton
G–Paul Flynn	G–Victor Conte
P–Harry D. Fike	P–Merle Schwartz
Cp–Thomas C. Coefield	Cp–Walter Witt
N–Roy L. Lilja	N–Joe Orlousky
B–Manuel Aquirre	B–
E–Victor J. Scapenoth	E–Sol Litman
R–Richard F. Roundhouse	R–Emery Schwartz
G–Joseph B. Young	G–Virgil Giberson
G–Henry M. Irwin	G–John Stone
G–Kincheloe J. Deason	G–Jack Young
G–Richard H. Morse	G–Robert Willeke
P–Franklin S. Mayall	P–Robert S. Anderson
Cp–Harry F. Ogden	Cp–Clifford J. Rachford
N–Leslie P. Turner	N–William E. Patterson
B–Joseph McGraph	B–Gordon H. Winters
E–Chedter Wilkes	E–Richard A. Varga
R–Joseph Burgess	R–Edward H. Tassara
G–John Cunliffe	G–Eeorge R. Fenton
G–Frank Gianessi	G–Loran V. Ward
G–Robery Litmer	G–Curtis A. Wilkins
G–Warren Miner	G–Edward W. Massey



CHAPTER V

THE WAR ENDS

The month of April 1945 witnessed the successful completion of the mission of the Strategic Air Forces in the European theater of operation, the rapid advances of the ground forces bringing the strategic air war to a sudden close. It had been won by a decisiveness which became increasingly evident as our armies continued to overrun Germany. During the middle of the month the Squadron, along with other similar units of the 15th AF, operated with the Tactical Air Forces in close cooperation with the ground forces.

During the month 19 combat missions were flown, bringing the total to 191 since becoming operational on 5 May 1944. Toward the close of the month combat personnel began to be shifted rapidly with units of the 485th Bombardment Group, indicating an early movement for the organization out of the theater. The speedy progress of all Allied military forces indicated an early end to hostilities, with a complete and unconditional surrender of the once powerful German war machine. The Squadron became nonoperational in the final week of the month, despite perfect flying weather, and it was apparent to all that the last mission had been flown in this theater of operations.

Meanwhile, beautiful spring weather brought out large numbers of men for the various sports. Morale continued excellent. Further decoration of both mess halls contributed. To celebrate "one year in combat" enlisted men made plans for the "biggest show yet" for early May. PX rations, particularly beer and "coke," were increased as warmer weather approached. Living conditions on "Pantanella Heights" had reached their very peak, field conditions considered.

May 1945 — the month all had been waiting for. With it came the successful end to the war in Europe, V-E Day being declared on 8 May 1945. The mission was accomplished. The Squadron enjoyed its first holiday since coming overseas and the entire Group turned out in a fitting ceremony commemorating this important occasion. All that was now left was to "sweat out" the re-deployment of troops in Europe, including, of course, the members of the Squadron. The War Department originally had made extensive plans for an indefinite stay in Europe after the close of hostilities. A point system, known as Adjusted Service Rating, had been worked out to determine the disposition of military personnel. This system was based on the following:

Service Credit — 1 point for each month of military service.

Overseas Credit — 1 point for each month of overseas service.

Combat Credit — 5 points for certain awards and battle stars.

Parenthood Credit — 12 points for each child under 18 (maximum 3).

A critical score of 85 points was determined as the minimum for discharge, provided personnel could be spared or replaced. Speculation became rife as to who would be discharged, who would remain in Europe to join the Army of Occupation Air Force, who would be sent to the United States for leave or furlough and further reassignment, and who would be sent directly to the Pacific theater of operations.

Rumors spread quickly but one seemed to persist — that the Group would be broken up and certain personnel assigned to the "Green Project," a plan for transporting by air a certain number of troops from Europe to the United States. As the month progressed this rumor appeared to have merit when certain personnel, not essential to such a plan, were withdrawn. The entire Squadron Armament Section was transferred to the 5th Bombardment Wing, with headquarters at Foggia, Italy; POM Inspectors sent teams to assist in putting all records in final shape for an early movement.

Word was then received that three of the four groups comprising the 55th Bombardment Wing would be sent to one of the following bases: Casablanca, Dakar, Natal, Trinidad. It developed that both groups on the Pantanella Air Field — the 464th and 465th — would go to Trinidad.

The work of vacating the field increased with feverish activity. What was once a bare hill had become a bustling community of homes and buildings. Only 14 months before, the squadron had struck its tents on a bleak and stormy night. For days thereafter, all efforts were made to establish adequate living and working conditions. As months went by, permanency was established with the construction of such buildings as a Mess Hall for enlisted personnel, Clubs for both officers and enlisted men, buildings for the Orderly Room, the Dispensary, and Operations and Supply Sections. With the aid of Italian civilian labor, together with the resourcefulness of American personnel, these buildings and houses soon replaced the hastily put up tents. Showers were added, and in one case, a built-in cement bath tub indicated the ingenuity of which Americans are capable. Tufa block was plentiful in southern Italy, wood being especially scarce, so that this native block was the basis for all building operations on Pantanella Air Field. During the construction period, the Squadron had erected some fifty fully constructed homes and buildings, as well as many more tufa-walled living quarters with tent-top roofs. Such was the picture when preparations to move were made.

The entire Air Echelon, less key personnel (Commanding Officer, Operations Officer, Squadron Navigator, and Squadron Bombardier) took off on 24 May 1945 for return to the United States and further assignment. An advance ground echelon of 59 specialists from the Engineering Section was flown to the Caribbean area to set up the operation prior to arrival of the main body. On 26 May 1945, the ground echelon, together with key personnel mentioned, left Pantanella by motor truck convoy for Staging Area No. 1, Bagnoli, Naples, Italy, to await shipment by water to Trinidad. Thus, just a year and two months after leaving this same staging area, the Squadron was back — the job done — with personnel ready for their next assignment.

With all records, clothing, equipment, etc., already checked, there was little to do at the Staging Area except await arrival of the transport, a matter of eleven days. A liberal pass policy was put into effect and personnel were given a final opportunity to do some sightseeing. Trips were made to Naples, Rome, Pompeii, Vesuvius and other nearby points of interest. The Isle of Capri held the interest of Squadron personnel and in order to permit them to visit this beautiful spot, a special boat was chartered at Sorrento, Italy, resulting in a never-to-be-forgotten outing for all who attended.

Prior to leaving Pantanella, the Group received a second unit citation (G.O. No. 2139, Hq. 15 AF dated 7 Apr 1945) for its outstanding performance on the mission of 3 Aug 1944, target Manzell-Dornier Works, Friedrichshafen, Germany, the presentation being made by General Twining on 1 May 1945. Thus many members of the Squadron added an Oak

Leaf Cluster to the unit citation badge they were already authorized to wear.

The Squadron, or what was now left of it, was at the Staging Area near Naples, Italy, as the month of June opened. However, on 6 June 1945, it left Naples for Trinidad, BWI, on the USS "Admiral Edward E. Eberle," a Coast Guard troop transport. Unlike the Liberty ship Walter Ranger which brought it overseas, the Squadron discovered the Eberle to be a brand-new, clean, fast vessel, featuring, among other things, excellent food, movies, and a loud speaker system which was employed to broadcast various announcements. No member of the Squadron who made the trip will ever forget the famed announcement: "Now hear this — Sweepers Man Your Brooms; Clean-Sweep down, fore and aft."

After a delightfully smooth crossing of nine days, the Squadron disem-barked at Port of Spain on 15 June 1945, proceeding from there some twenty miles to Fort Read, where personnel were billeted.

For two weeks after arrival at Fort Read, personnel went through a "screening" process before being assigned to various fields in the Caribbean area, some going to Natal, Forteleza, or Belem, in Brazil; others to Atkinson (Georgetown), British Guiana; some remaining at Waller Field, Fort Read, Trinidad, BWI; some going to Berinqueen Field, Puerto Rico, while some few lucky men were assigned to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida. A small staff remained as key personnel to close the records of the Squadron prior to inactivation.

Perhaps it was somewhat of an anticlimax to be broken up and be called upon to perform a noncombat job, after making such an outstanding record in combat, but in the eyes of the War Department, this job was important, and the personnel of the Squadron selected to do it accepted the assignment with a determination to do their level best to see that the project would be carried out successfully.

Thus ended the activities of a truly great organization — the 783rd Bombardment Squadron (H). It had been exceptionally well trained and had given an excellent account of itself in both the training and combat areas.

The 465th Bombardment Group (H), which included the 783rd Bombard-ment Squadron (H) was inactivated effective 31 July 1945, by authority of G.O. No. 10, Hq. 1107 AAFBU, dated 29 July 1945.



783RD BOMB SQUADRON BATTLE CASUALTY RECORD

LEGEND: P– Pilot; Cp– Copilot; N– Navigator; B– Bombardier; E– Flight Engineer; R– Radio Operator; G– Gunner; POW– Prisoner–Of–War; KIA– Killed–In–Action; MIA– Missing–In–Action; WIA– Wounded–In–Action; RMC– Those who escape capture and Returned to Military Control.

ROLL OF HONOR

DATE	AREA NAME	RANK	TYPE OF CASUALTY	
1944				
18 May	Ploesti, Rumania	E– Trauth, Edward J. E– Cohen, Victor	T/Sgt T/Sgt	–WIA –WIA
29 May	Vienna, Austria	P– Vorhies, William L. Cp– Livesay, Owen W. N– Ryan, Daniel J. B– Groh, Edward A. E– Johnson, Hubert P. R– Pitman, Merton P. G– Payne, George J. G– Yokitis, Charles G. G– Luce, John J. G– Ward, Homer L.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW
30 Jun	Blechhammer, Germany	P– Roberson, Lubie M. Cp– Rogers, William F. N– Downey, William B. B– Casadevall, Joseph M. E– McGuirk, John W. R– Scherger, Joseph E. G– Crary, Willard D. G– Dumas, Donald A. G– Haskins, Herbert J. G– Weixelman, Lovis H.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–RMC

7 Jul	Kessel, Germany (Blechhammer Oil Refinery)	P– Pilegard, Ralph L. Cp– Kanik, Frank J. N– Heron, James P. B– Barnaby, John F. E– Huebner, Durwood E. R– Robinson, Fred J. G– Barker, Rome L. G– Monge, Kenneth O. G– Henderson, Jesse L. G– Wilson, Bernard A.	2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA
8 Jul	Vienna, Austria	P– Jumper, Jesse T. Cp– Ward, Royce L. N– Kubanis, Ivan J. B– Mullins, James D. E– Kulczyk, Eugene R– Sedlak, Frank C. G– Nashalsky, Harold G– Delucca, Anthony J. G– Robinson, Edward D. G– Moore, Carl D.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
12 Jul	Nimes, France	P– Swanzy, Robert P. P– Nelson, William A. Cp– Crabtree, Robert W. N– Thomas, Robert B. B– Smith, Ralph J. E– Hooge, Paul H. R– Vaughan, Wilber R. G– Montana, Lupe G– Wilson, Walter P. G– Walsh, Thomas W. G– Cripps, Charles A.	Capt. 1st Lt 2nd Lt 1st Lt 1st Lt T/Sgt T/Sgt S/Sgt S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–KIA MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC
19 Jul	Munich, Germany	P– Bonds, Thomas W. Cp– Carter, Guy M. N– Winston, Richard C. B– Rinard, Ralph J. E– Adair, Carl S. R– Albertson, Jack G– Radebaugh, Melvin J. G– Reifsnyder, Harry G. G– Dunton, Lloyd F. G– Bracey, Thomas L.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW

19 Jul	Munich, Germany	P– Greenwood, Thomas W. Cp– Goplen, Francis A. N– Bitterman, William N. B– Bolinski, Daniel S. E– Clutts, Leonard D. R– McCloskey, James W. G– Griesing, Charles E. G– Sams, William D. G– Douglas, William L. G– Dunnagan, Ernest N.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. Pvt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
3 Aug	Friedrichshafen, Germany	P– Elliott, Wilbert Cp– Bailey, Fay C. N– Connell, James L. B– Sanford, Joseph C. E– Murphy, Alvin M. R– Griffin, Robert J G– Kapp, Gilbert D G– Cutler, Earl R. G– Valentine, Robert L. G– Bernstein, Jack	1st Lt. 2nd Pt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
3 Aug	Friedrichshafen, Germany	P– Pace, Stanley C. Cp– Allen, John L. N– Coote, Joseph J. B– Teller, William I. E– Holland, Dennis A. R– Bruscinski, Henry S. G– Jackson, Cleo H. G– Strahan, Samuel J. G– Perkins, Dwight G. G– Schultz, Steve	Capt. 2nd Lt. 1st Lt. 1st Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
7 Aug	Blechhammer, Germany	P– Bates, Cecil R. Cp– Wilson, Weiser W. N– Conlin, Charles J. B– Browning, Woodrow W. E– Taylor, Joe R– Main, Carl H. G– Baronoski, Alexander G– Wilby, John J. G– Weber, Grover J. G– Yatkauskas, Albert J.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW

24 Aug	Pardubice, Czechoslovakia	P– Clark, Thomas R. Jr. Cp– Jones, Robert J. N– Christianson, Russell N– Kardas , Henry B– Sheridan, William P. E– Sullivan, James T. R– Stroud, William D. G– Sullivan, Thomas P. G– Trimingham, Richard H. G– Huastes, Leonard M. G– Lewis, Robert L.	Capt. 2nd Lt. 1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 1st Lt. T/Sgt. Pvt. Pvt. Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA
25 Aug	Prostejov, Czechoslovakia	B– Fritz, John D.	2nd Lt.	MIA–KIA
27 Aug	Blechhammer, Germany	G– Swanson, Robert E. # (Bailed out near IP)	S/Sgt.	MIA–#
10 Sep	Vienna, Austria	P– Parkison, Herbert Cp– Jester, Herbert W. Jr. N– Ewer, James G. B– Dussault, Louis U. E– Riley, Robert E. G– Buol, Vernon H. G– Edmonds, Richard A G– Miller, Douglas F. G– Olsen, Orville R. G– Thurston, Lawrence B	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
12 Sep	Munich, Germany	P– Hausner,Sigmund E. Cp– Wine, William D. N– Smith, John R. B– Deegan, Orville J. E– Brown, Owrie V. R– Saalfeld, Harold G– Ruffalo, Donald G– Davis, Benjamin, J. G– Bradford, David D G– Honey, Allen A.	2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA– MIA– MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA– MIA–KIA MIA– MIA–KIA MIA–WIA

13 Sep	Oswiecim, Poland	P– Clark, Charles A. Jr. Cp– Duckworth, Milton H. N– Aloys, Frank N– Burkhardt, Herbert V. B– Knaus, John V. E– Cohen, Victor R– Walters, Jack A. G– Reagan, Edward M G– Feeley, Weyland B. G– Crenshaw, Leroy J.	Col. 1st Lt. 1st Lt. 2nd Lt. Capt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. T/Sgt.	MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–RMC
(Above crew returned 9–19–44 flying a B–17 on a bombing mission from Russia to Foggia, Italy).				
13 Sep	Oswiecim, Poland	P– Fischback, Allen D. Cp– Biddle, John S. N– B– Bier, Samuel S. E– Griffin, Orval E. R– Miosky, Edmund J. G– Wightman, William J. G– Harrison, Joseph E. G– Coburn, William S. G– Arnold, Robert F.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. Sgt. Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC
22 Sep	Munich, Germany	P– Kraft, Roger L. Cp– Coleman, John N. N– O'Brien, Earl B– Bistarkey, John E– Sangas, John R– Truitt, Brooks K. G– Curry, William H. G– Goldman, Robert E. G– Horne, Joseph R. G– Rosen, Leonard T.	2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. F/O. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
22 Sep	Munich, Germany	P– Williams, George W. Cp– Grieble, Gorden A. N– Falkoff, Harry B– Nyoona, Chin I. E– Ferroll, Robert W. R– McElyea, Ralph W. G– Capps, Perry J. G– Enzor, Austin F. G– Lafata, Donald F. G– Thompson, James F.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW

4 Oct	Munich, Germany	P– Miller, William A. Cp– Wynn, George A. N– Bassler, Kenneth R. B– Hayman, George W. E– Musch, Alvin L. R– Graham, Harold N. G– Denny, Robert S. G– Moony, Thomas W. G– Jaeger, George F. G– Taylor, George E.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA
13 Oct	Blechhammer, Germany	P– Lane, Homer W. Cp– Tannenbaum, Marvin N– Guiffre, Marvin B– Volkman, Eric W. E– Phillips, Stanley A. R– Prouty, William C. G– Wilson, William W. G– Harlin, John R. Jr. G– Zacharias, Michael H. G– Betz, Harry A.	2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–RMC MIA–RMC
20 Oct	Munich, Germany	P– Curtis, James R. Cp– Forsberg, Delbert E. N– Fowlie, Gorden H.F. B– Long , Lyle H. E– Rutgers, Richard K. R– Mangan, Charles A. G– Edmark, Royal E. G– Marsh, William A. G– Harris, Gerald L. G– Werner, Earl J.	F/O. 2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–RMC MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
20 Oct	Munich, Germany	P– Evans, Dean P. Cp– Edwards, Gorden L. N– Hatch, Wilson L. B– Roberts, Melvin O. E– Nunn, Thomas R. R– Corn, Wilford J. G– Fenske, Robert A. G– Rhinevault, George B. G– Austen, Charles A. G– Pohlman, Victor E.	2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW

20 Oct	Munich, Germany	P– Wright, Harvey D. Cp– Mitchell, William B– Hartman, John K. N– None– E– McNamee, John F. R– Messinger, Robert H. G– Rutan, William T. G– Hoyle, Zane D. G– Korf, Joseph J. G– Rebottaro, Louis A.	1st Lt. 1st Lt. 1st Lt. T/Sgt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
16 Nov	Munich, Germany	P– Stringham, Irving R. Jr. Cp– Brimhall, Delbert C. N– Kipp, Eugene C. B– Latimer, Edward J. E– Greco, Natale A. R– Gialo, Pasquale A. G– Mead, Egbert E. G– Ferguson, James A. G– Dyrda, Albert J. G– Gibhardt, William B.	Capt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
16 Nov	Munich, Germany	P– Waymon, Emil E. Cp– Knous, John G. Jr. N– Cross, George R. B– Sheets, Collie E. E– Miles, Dale D. R– Smith, Vernon L. G– Kraemer, Francis A. G– Payson, Hollis E. G– Forbes, Joseph C. G– Fisher, Roy D.	2nd Lt. F/O. 2nd Lt. 2nd Lt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW
20 Nov	Blechhammer, Germany	P– Taft, Ernest R. Cp– Pope, Thomas N– Cole, Erin J. B– Kolago, Michael E– Ritch, Charlie C. R– Burda, Charles F. G– Balke, Richard M. G– Lowman, Robert H. G– Goldsworthy, Richard H. G– Cassady, Jack E.	2nd Lt. # F/O. F/O. F/O. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA

The German military told Lt. Taft that the German civilians captured and killed all of the enlisted men.

Cp– Wills, Robert F. 1st Lt. MIA–RMC

Note: Wills was flying with Lt. Norman's crew from 780th Squadron.

		G– Stuart, Relaford W.	S/Sgt.	–WIA
20 Nov	Blechhammer, Germany	P– Lokker, C. J. P– Duckworth, Milton H. N– Kutger, Joseph T. B– Hockman, Robert M. E– Billings, Lee R. R– Miosky, Edmund J. G– Bourne, James A. G– Flynn, Paul. Jr. G– Rabkin, Jack	Lt. Col. Capt. 1st Lt. 1st Lt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA
6 Dec	Bratislava, Slovakia	P– Owens, Harold F. Cp– Raetz, Irvin K. N– Findlay, Lloyd R. B– Deplue, John D. III E– Behr, Earl T. R– Curtis, Thomas R. Jr. G– Davis, Hudson J. G– McDonald, Edward E. G– Roberts, Charles E. G– Gordon, Robert B.	1st Lt. 2nd Lt. 1st Lt. 1st Lt. T/Sgt. S/Sgt. S/Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA
16 Dec	Brux, Germany	P– Thompson, Hugh P. Cp– Rice, Louis L. N– Treglia, Joseph J. B– Haber, Abraham E– Odom, James E. R– Quaglietta, Louis J. G– Ganson, Harry J. G– Shott, Bernard E. G– Stanford, Wayne D. G– Kotik, Steve J.	2nd Lt. F/O. F/O. F/O. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt. Sgt.	MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–KIA MIA–POW MIA–KIA

(The following list was taken from the 783rd Sq. 40th Reunion Booklet. The names of these men were not in the list of MIA crews provided by Sgt John Walker).

Bilharz, Gordon	Lt.	#
Latimer, Edward J.	Lt.	–KIA
Lyon, Bruce	Lt.	–KIA
Payne, George	S/Sgt.	–KIA
Pricket, Theodore	S/Sgt.	–KIA
Roberts, Charles	S/Sgt	–KIA

Smith, R. J.	F/O	-KIA
Tarantino, Paul A.	Lt.	• -KIA

1945

15 Jan ALL KILLED IN PRATICE FORMATION:

P– Matzger , Charles W.	2nd Lt.
Cp– Kauffman, Gilbert H.	2nd Lt.
N– Pfalzgraf, Paul E.	2nd Lt.
B– Hansen, Victor Jr.	2nd Lt.
E– Leslie, Alex J.	Sgt.
R– Wise, Richard L.	Sgt.
G– Scroggins, Elbert L.	Sgt.
G– Williams, Verlin S.	Sgt.
G– Wolfording, Raymond C.	Sgt.

20 Jan ISLE–OF–VIS	P– Tennille, Arthur C. Jr.	Capt.	-KIA
	P– Shoener, Harold W.	1st Lt	-KIA
	Cp– Eberhart, Raymond W.	2nd Lt.	-KIA
	N– Aurentz, Russell J.	2nd Lt.	-KIA
	B– Boeris, John N.	2nd Lt.	-KIA
	E– Puckett, Theodore S.	S/Sgt.	-KIA
	R– Mulrooney, Francis T.	S/Sgt.	-KIA
	G– Barlett, John W.	Sgt.	-KIA
	G– Rutgers, Richard K.	S/Sgt.	-KIA

16 Feb Regensburg, Germany	P– Lyon, William	2nd Lt.	MIA-KIA
	Cp– Wine, William D.	2nd Lt.	MIA-KIA
	N– Turner, Leslie P.	2nd Lt.	MIA-KIA
	E– Brown, Owrie V.	S/Sgt.	MIA-WIA
	R– Mangan, Charles A.	S/Sgt.	MIA-KIA
	G– Collins, Raymond J.	S/Sgt.	MIA-KIA
	G– Honey, Allen A.	S/Sgt.	MIA-WIA
	G– Gatling, Herbert M.	Sgt.	MIA-KIA
	G– Busch, David L.	Sgt.	MIA-KIA

SUMMARY

Killed in Action	82	POW	182?
Killed	9	RMC	38
		WIA	???
Total	91		220

Lt. Gordon Bilharz died from a heart attack.
 • Lt. Paul A. Tarantino crashed while flying a P-47 on the way back from a mission.



MISSION RECORD

Legend:: M. Y. – Marshalling Yards; O. R. – Oil Refinery

MISSION NO.	DATE	PLACE BOMBED	TARGET	783rd	
				FLIGHT TIME	PLANES LOST
1944					
1	5 May	Podgorica, Yugoslavia	German Hq.	5:15	
2	6 May	Craiova, Rumania	M. Y. 7:00		
3	10 May	Weiner Neustadt, Aus.	(No bomb drop-cloud cover).		
4	12 May	Parma, Italy	M. Y.	8:00	
5	13 May	Parma, Italy	M. Y.	7:00	
6	14 May	Mestre, Italy	M. Y.	6:00	
7	17 May	Piombino, Italy	Port	6:05	
8	18 May	Ploesti, Rumania	O. R.	8:00	
9	19 May	Forli, Italy	M. Y.	5:30	
10	22 May	Valmontone, Italy	(No bomb drop-cloud cover).		
11	23 May	Valmontone, Italy	M. Y.	4:35	
12	24 May	Weiner Neustadt, Aus.	Factory	7:00	
13	25 May	Givors, France	M. Y	9:10	
14	26 May	Lyon, France	M. Y.	8:45	
15	27 May	Nimes, France	M. Y.	9:00	
16	29 May	Atzgersdorf, Aus.	Factory	7:15	1
17	30 May	Wiener Neustadt, Aus.	Factory	8:00	
18	31 May	Ploesti, Rumania	O. R.	8:00	
19	2 Jun	Cluj, Rumania	M. Y.	7:25	
20	4 Jun	Turin, Italy	M. Y.	8:10	
21	5 Jun	Ferrara, Italy	M. Y.	7:45	
22	6 Jun	Ploesti, Rumania	O. R.	8:30	
23	7 Jun	Leghorn, Italy	Docks	6:45	
24	9 Jun	Allach, Germany	Factory	7:55	

25	10 Jun	Trieste, Italy	M. Y.	6:00	
26	11 Jun	Smederevo, Yugoslavia	O. R.	5:30	
27	13 Jun	Munich, Germany	Factory	7:05	
28	14 Jun	Petfurdo, Hungary	O. R.	6:45	
29	16 Jun	Vienna, Aus.	Factory	7:10	
30	22 Jun	Bologna, Italy	M. Y.	6:00	
31	23 Jun	Giurgiu, Rumania	Oil Installation	8:20	
32	25 Jun	Bar-le-Duc, France	O. R.	9:00	
33	26 Jun	Vienna, Aus.	Factory	7:50	
34	28 Jun	Bucharest, Rumania	O. R.	7:30	
35	30 Jun	Blechhammer, Ger.	M. Y.	7:50	1
36	2 Jun	Budapest, Hungary	M. Y.	6:45	
37	3 Jul	Timisoara, Rumania	M. Y.	6:30	
38	5 Jul	Toulon, France	M. Y.	9:15	
39	6 Jul	Porto Marghera, Italy	O. R.	6:30	
40	7 Jul	Kassel, Germany	O. R.	8:30	1
41	8 Jul	Vienna, Aus. Florisdorf	O. R.	7:30	1
42	12 Jul	Nimes, France	M. Y.	9:15	1
43	13 Jul	Porto Marghera, Italy	Oil Storage	6:30	
	14 Jul	Porto Marghera, Italy	(Mission Incomplete)	6:10	
44	15 Jul	Ploesti, Rumania	O. R.	8:00	
45	16 Jul	Wiener-Nudorff, Aus.	M. Y.	6:40	
46	18 Jul	Southern Germany	Syn. Fuel Plant	7:00	
47	19 Jul	Munich, Germany	Factory	8:00	2
48	20 Jul	Friedrichshafen, Ger.	Factory	7.50	
49	22 Jul	Ploesti, Rumania	Oil Storage	8:00	
50	25 Jul	Valence LaTresorerie	Dock	7:45	
51	26 Jul	Linz, Germany	Goering Tank Works	8:00	
52	27 Jul	Vienna, Aus.	Airdrome	7:00	
53	28 Jul	Ploesti, Rumania	O. R.	8:00	
54	30 Jul	Budapest, Hungary	M. Y.	7:15	
55	2 Aug	Genoa, Italy	Dock	6:25	
56	3 Aug	Friedrichshafen, Ger.	Factory	7:50	2
57	6 Aug	Avignon, France	Bridge	9:15	
58	7 Aug	Blechhammer, Ger.	Factory	7:45	1
59	9 Aug	Budapest, Hungary	M. Y.	6:35	
60	12 Aug	Sete, France	Gun Positions	9:00	
61	14 Aug	Sete, France	Gun Positions	8:35	
62	14 Aug	St.-Tropez, France	Gun Positions	7:15	
63	15 Aug	LeTeil,	France Bridge	9:50	
64	16 Aug	Friedrichshafen, Ger.	Aircraft Factory	8:30	
65	18 Aug	Ploesti, Rumania	Oil Installation	8:05	
66	20 Aug	Czechowice, Poland	Dzudzico O. R.	8:30	

67	21 Aug	Nis, Yugoslavia	Troop Quarters	5:35	
68	22 Aug	Korneuburg, Aus.	O. R.	7:15	
69	23 Aug	Vienna, Aus.		7:50	
70	24 Aug	Pardubice, Czechoslovakia	Fanto O. R.	9:00	1
71	25 Aug	Prostejov,Czechoslovakia	Airdrome	8:40	
72	26 Aug	Ferrara, Italy	Bridge	6:50	
73	27 Aug	Blechhammer, Ger.	Factory	8:00	
74	28 Aug	Szony, Hungary		7:00	
75	29 Aug	Moravska, Czechoslovakia		8:10	
76	1 Sep	Szolnok, Hungary		6:50	
77	2 Sep	Vis, Yugoslavia	M. Y.	5:35	
78	4 Sep	Bronzolo, Italy	M. Y.	6:50	
79	6 Sep	Nyiregyhaza, Hungary	M. Y.	4:45	
80	10 Sep	Vienna, Aus.		7:50	
81	12 Sep	Munich, Ger.	Factory	8:40	1
82	13 Sep	Oswiecim, Poland	Syn. Oil Refinery	8:00	2
83	17 Sep	Budapest, Hungary	O. R.	7:15	
84	18 Sep	Szob, Hungary	Railroad Bridge	6:50	
85	20 Sep	Hatvan, Hungary	M. Y.	6:40	
86	22 Sep	Munich, Ger.		7:30	2
87	23 Sep	Tagliamento, Italy		7:00	
88	24 Sep	Scaramanga, Greece	Submarine Dock	7:15	
89	4 Oct	Munich, Ger.	M. Y.	8:00	1
90	7 Oct	Ereskujvar, Czechoslovakia	M. Y.	7:50	
91	10 Oct	Northern Italy (No bomb drop- cloud cover)		6:40	
92	11 Oct	Vienna, Aus.		7:40	
93	12 Oct	Bologna, Italy	Storage Depot	5:40	
94	13 Oct	Blechhammer, Ger.	O. R.	7:50	1
95	16 Oct	Trieben, Aus		8:10	
96	17 Oct	Vienna, Aus.		7:25	
97	20 Oct	Munich, Ger.		8:05	3
98	1 Nov	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	6:30	
99	4 Nov	Linz, Austria	Benzol Plant	8:00	

100	5 Nov	Mitrovica, Yugo.	Troop Quarters	5:30	
101	5 Nov	Vienna, Aus.	Florisdorf O. R.	7:50	
102	6 Nov	Vienna, Aus.		7:55	
103	7 Nov	Isarco Albes, Italy	Railroad Bridge	6:00	
104	15 Nov	Linz, Austria	Benzol Plant	8:00	
105	16 Nov	Munich, Germany	M. Y.	8:00	
106	16 Nov	Prijepolje, Yugo.		5:30	1
107	17 Nov	Vienna, Aus. Florisdorf	O. R.	7:40	
108	18 Nov	Udine, Italy	Air drome	6:15	
109	19 Nov	Linz, Austria	Benzol Plant	8:00	
110	20 Nov	Blechhammer, Ger.	South O. R.	8:00	2
111	22 Nov	Salzburg, Ger.		7:30	
112	25 Nov	Munich, Ger. Night Mission		8:10	
113	2 Dec	Bechhammer, Ger.	South O. R.	7:50	
114	3 Dec	Villach, Aus.	M. Y.	7:20	
115	6 Dec	Bratislava, Slovakia	M. Y.	7:00	1
116	7 Dec				
117	8 Dec	Villach, Aus.	M. Y. (Night)	7:30	
118	11 Dec	Vienna,Aus.	South O. R.	7:30	
119	11 Dec	Blechhammer, Ger.	South O. R.	7:50	
120	15 Dec	Amstetten, Ger.	South O. R.	7:15	
121	16 Dec	Brux, Germany	O. R.	7:50	2
122	17 Dec	Blechhammer, Ger.	South O. R.	7:50	
123	18 Dec	Blechhammer, Ger.	North O. R.	8:30	
124	19 Dec	Maribor, Yugoslavia	M. Y.	5:20	
125	20 Dec	Brux, Germany	O. R.	7:50	
126	26 Dec	Odertal, Ger.	O. R.	8:00	
127	27 Dec	Maribor, Yugo.	M. Y.	5:20	
128	28 Dec	Amstetten, Ger,	M. Y.	7:45	
129	29 Dec	Verona, Italy	M. Y.	6:00	
1945					
130	4 Jan	Bolzano, Italy	M. Y.	6:15	
131	20 Jan	Linz, Germany	M. Y.	8:00	
132	31 Jan	Moosbierbaum, Aus.		8:20	
133	1 Feb	Maribor, Yugo.		5:20	
134	5 Feb	Regensburg, Ger.	Oil Storage	8:40	
135	7 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	Florisdorf O. R.	7:30	
136	8 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	South Goods Depot	7:30	
137	9 Feb	Moosbierbaum, Aus.	O. R.	8:20	
138	13 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	Schechat O. R.		7:30
139	13 Feb	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	6:30	
140	14 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	Schechat O. R .	7:30	

141	15 Feb	Wiener Neustadt, Aus.	M. Y.	8:00
142	16 Feb	Regensburg, Ger.	Airdrome	9:00
143	17 Feb	Polla, Italy	Oil Storage	5:10
144	19 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	M. Y.	7:20
145	20 Feb	Trieste, Italy	Shipyards	5:20
146	21 Feb	Vienna, Aus.	M. Y.	7:30
147	22 Feb	Austrian Target	(Ineffective- cloud cover)	
148	23 Feb	Villach, Aus.	M. Y.	7:20
149	24 Feb	Italian Target	(Ineffective-cloud cover)	
150	25 Feb	Linz, Austria	Ordnance Depot	8:00
151	27 Feb	Augsburg, Ger.	M. Y.	9:00
152	28 Feb	Vipiteno, Italy	M. Y.	6:00
153	1 Mar	Maribor, Yugoslavia		5:25
154	2 Mar	Linz, Austria	M. Y.	8:00
155	4 Mar	Szombathely, Hungary	M. Y.	7:15
156	8 Mar	Verona, Italy	M. Y.	5:20
157	9 Mar	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	6:30
158	12 Mar	Vienna, Aus.	Florisdorf M. Y.	7:40
159	13 Mar	Regensburg, Ger.	Southeast M. Y.	9:00
160	14 Mar	Novezamky, Hungary		7:00
161	15 Mar	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	6:30
162	16 Mar	Graz-Pragersku, Aus.	M. Y.	6:40
163	19 Mar	Muhldorf, Germany	M. Y.	8:40
164	20 Mar	Amstetten, Germany	M. Y.	9:00
165	21 Mar	Neuburg, Germany	Airdrome	9:15
166	22 Mar	Vienna, Austria	Helingenstadt M. Y.	7:40
167	23 Mar	Gmund, Austria	M. Y.	7:00
168	24 Mar	Neuburg, Germany	Airdrome	8:20
169	25 Mar	Prague, Czechoslovakia	Letnany Airdrome	9:15
170	26 Mar	Wiener Neustadt, Aus.	M. Y.	7:00
171	30 Mar	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	8:00
172	31 Mar	Villach, Austria	M. Y.	7:20
173	1 Apr	Ineffective		
174	2 Apr	Graz, Austria	M. Y.	6:30
175	5 Apr	Ineffective		
176	7 Apr	Ineffective		
177	8 Apr	Fortezza, Italy	M. Y.	6:10
178	9 Apr	Northern Italy	Lugo Troop Quarters	6:40
179	10 Apr	Northern Italy	Lugo Troop Quarters	6:40
180	11 Apr	Goito, Italy	Ammo and Fuel Dump	6:30
181	12 Apr	Piave, Italy	Railroad Bridge	5:00
182	14 Apr	Ossopo, Italy	Motor Transit Depot	5:10
183	15 Apr	Casarsa, Italy	By-pass (Blue Force)	5:25

15 Apr	Bologna, Italy	Military(Red Force)	4:20
184 16 Apr	Bologna, Italy	Military Target	4:20
185 17 Apr	Bologna, Italy	Military Target	4:20
186 19 Apr	Rosenheim, Ger.	M. Y.	8:30
187 20 Apr	Garzare, Italy	Railroad Bridge	5:00
188 23 Apr	Cavarzere, Italy	Road Bridge Blue Force	5:20
23 Apr	Padua, Italy	Bridge No.2 Red Force	5:00
189 24 Apr	Brondolo, Italy	Railroad Bridge	5:30
190 25 Apr	Linz, Austria	Main Station	6:30
191 26 Apr	*Ineffective		

*Plan was to bomb Able-Kolbnitz Bridge in Austria, and
Baker Ammunition Dump in Malcontenta, Italy.



FIFTY MISSIONS COMPLETED

■ Milton E. Roush

Milton E. Roush was on Leroy "Pappy" Brown's crew. He kept a complete diary of the time he was in Italy. We are including a part of that diary in the Squadron History as he recorded it starting on August 25, 1944, the day he finished his fiftieth mission:

"Well, again yesterday some good pals went down. The Group lost three planes to flak hits on their way to Pardubice, Czechoslovakia. The 783rd lost another crew. Capt. Clark, Lt. Jones, Lt. Christenson, Lt. Kardas, Lt. Sheridan, Sgts Jim Sullivan, Tom Sullivan, Trimingham, Haustes, Stroud, and Lewis. This was one of the five original crews in this squadron. (Sheridan and Trimingham were from Heim's crew and Kardas was from Duckworth's crew). There are two original crews left now. Lt.. Adams finished with fifty-one missions. They saw 50 fighters, but weren't attacked.

Got a double mission to Prostejov, Czechoslovakia. We hit an airfield and hangars with ten 500-pound general purpose bombs. Destroyed the target. *No flak, no fighters, no losses.* Flew Blue "J" — Jumper's ship. Swanzy's crew are back in the Squadron. They were shot down on July 12.

August 26 — Some of the boys went to Rome today for four days. I hope to go next week. I was just reading up on 15th AF reports in S-2, and we have a 66% bombing average for the past ten missions — 1000 ft. We have an average for this month of 75% — 2000 ft. We're leading the AF with 460th second. We've got lots of commendations and the best average ever made in 15th AF. This is the seventh consecutive day for our Group to fly. The Group hit a bridge at Ferrara, Italy. Intense and heavy flak, no losses. This Group is hot. The orders this morning said we were to do the job when other groups have failed — they hit it!

August 27 — The Group went to Blechhammer, Germany today. That's a darn rough target, but we had no losses. Bill and I went to Bari with Duckworth and Lundberg (D and L Airlines, ha). They are two crazy pilots. We saw Walden, and he seems to be doing okay. He was in a wheel chair, but his leg was still in a cast. I hope he gets to go home soon. He said that Foster had completed his missions and was now at home. One of our Squadron men bailed out near the target today for no reason — Sgt. Swanson.

August 28 — Group went north of Budapest to Szony, Hungary, today. They get a double mission, thereby finishing. Head, Powell, and Frederickson. I'm glad the *entire crew* is through. It's a shame that Cohen didn't continue flying — he'd have been done too. I didn't do much today as usual. I did some typing for the awards and decorations committee.

August 29 — Group went south of Blechhammer to Moravska, Czechoslovakia, today. No losses. I surely got a lot of mail — one from Kay, three from Adeline, Jim, Dorsey, Lavina, etc. I've been trying to catch up, but I surely hate to write letters. Gumm and Brown returned from Rome. I hope we get to go as I want to pick up some gifts. I guess I'll do some more typing tomorrow, but I don't care much for it tho'. This has been a very hot day!

August 30 — Not much doing today. The group had a stand-down. We've flown the last ten consecutive days. Our crew had to teach a new crew all we knew about the ship and flying. I have a slight case of dysentery and am now taking the sulfa treatment. It's even too hot to sleep this PM. I wrote a letter to Jim and Joe. Most of the guys got drunk tonight. I sure didn't and I was quite ill. I got a nice package from Janet.

August 31 — This is a very nice day. I've been giving away a bunch of articles this morning. I guess I'll write some letters and loaf around. We got paid today, and I now have quite a bit of dough. I think I'll soon get to Rome.

September 1 — Today Bill, O'Brian, Kit Carson, Head, and I started to Rome. We caught a plane to Naples and stayed there all night. Our pass doesn't start until tomorrow. We picked up some gals this evening. Stayed at a decent home and started thumbing toward Rome without any breakfast.

September 2 — We surely had a hard time getting to Rome. Were we sore when we finally got there about 4:30! Still no chow, ha! We found a nice home to stay. Rome really looks nice. I saw some of the coastal towns, and I have never seen such a mess. There isn't a complete building standing.

September 3 — Nothing exciting. Rome is much cooler than the surrounding places.

September 4 — Went out with a gal I met last night — she's okay. Sure glad to hear Ploesti is taken. We've lost 342 planes in 91 missions over there. Some of the returned POWs had made the first Ploesti raid, Aug 1, 1942. They had it pretty rough in camp — no food. Thinking back over combat — it hasn't been much fun. Rome doesn't know there's a war on compared to other parts of Italy.

September 5 — Each day I've been wanting to make the tourist sights over here, but it seems that I can't get anyone to go with me. Maybe I'm too lazy, ha — *no doubt of that!* I guess we'll be going home tomorrow morning. Bill and I went with a couple of gals. They're really characters. Head and O'Brian had a couple this PM. Head's was a case, ha!

September 6 — We went out to the field this AM early, but we didn't have a ride. We went back to town and ate dinner. We got a ride at the airfield about 1300 with a 97th B-17. This was my first B-17 ride. They are about the same as B-24's. We had good luck, and were back in the Squadron at 1700. We didn't get much mail while we were gone.

September 7 — Gumm has gone home. There was a real guy! He didn't make TSgt either. Cintola, Austin, Thompson, Wachter, Stanart went home this morning — at least to Naples. Some of the crews got back from Ploesti, but we didn't have any Squadron crews down over there.

September 8, Friday — Gregory and I went up to Foggia today to see his cousin. They're in a small trucking outfit, and they really have a good deal. We ate chow in Foggia and supper in Cerignola. I hear that some of us are leaving the Squadron tomorrow.

September 9, Saturday — We're shipping out today. I started to write some letters, but we're moving at 1300. Going by trucks. We had a few bottles, of course. Yates, Howard, Weeks, Roush, Kelly, Carson, Head, Frederickson, Downs, Martin, Evers, etc. We didn't get into camp until 2200.

September 10, Sunday — Just loafed around today. Had clothing check, etc. We're ready to ship. I went to church this evening. Saw a show, "The Great Moment."

September 11, Monday — Just loafing again. We hear every type of rumor. Some of the officers are on shipping orders. Gumm and Cintola went out yesterday.

September 12, Tuesday — Austin and some more of the boys from another battalion left today. There aren't many men left around here. All the POWs have gone. We get two bottles of beer rations tonight.

September 13, Wednesday — We had a roll-call today and we're going to move to another area for shipment. Darn, I hope it's soon. The days are really hot and dusty. We don't do any work though.

September 14 — Nothing cooking, but I'm terrible disgusted.

September 15 — Went to see boxing bouts last evening. They were pretty good bouts. I hear that the Italian and German prisoners are treated like "gods" in the US, while they're stabbing our pals in the back over here. That's rough to take. Some of the infantry have refused to fight. This is a
---- of a place! I've never been quite so disgusted.

September 16, Saturday — The USO opened today, but it was as bad as all the other stuff over here. Lines were very long, and then they didn't have much. In the evening O'Brian and I went to a show, "Higher and Higher," with Sinatra. He has a swell voice. I thought it was a fair show.

September 17, Sunday — I guess we're moving to town today. Any place will be better than this. It can't be as dusty. We were ready to leave today at 1300, but we didn't leave until 1530 as usual. We moved into a new place in town — an old castle that accommodates 1500. It isn't such a bad place, but it isn't good. The beds are very hard, but we don't have to do any details.

September 18, Monday — Was that bed ever hard last night — wow! Just a hard board bed! The lines for chow, etc. are long, but it is an improvement over the last place. I hear that 50% of us can get a pass each day. There isn't anything to do in town, but at least it'll be out of camp. I'm very disgusted with myself for spending all my money now that I'm ready to go home. I've decided to go on a budget after my furlough. Hope that boat comes soon!

September 19, Tuesday — Nothing doing today. I read all the magazines I could find and played solitaire. Oh yes, I did write Kay a short letter. I think four empty transports came into the harbor last evening.

September 20, Wednesday — It really rained last night and this AM. I guess it'll be rainy every day now — the season for rains is now due. I'm glad that we haven't any mud up here in the castle. Got a pass this PM. O'Brian, Hatfield, Weeks, and I rode street cars all over town. We went to the boxing bouts. They were very good — one knockout was in 11 seconds of 1st round. Kelly, Yates, and Carson left to guard a transport of prisoners to the states.

September 21, Thursday — They have us on KP now. Guess my number will come up soon. It rains every day, but I guess it's time as this is the first day of fall. A few of the fellows went home by ATC (Air Transport Command) today. My luck seems to be failing. Darn, we can't even get any PX rations here. I think the POWs that we have are treated better than we are. Sometimes I wonder what we're fighting for.

September 22, Friday — Today all the men in my house were on KP — Jerry Howard, Head, Reason, Evers, etc. We had quite a good time, particularly when the "Ities" came through the line. I'm sure no GI went away hungry. It rained some again today. There were a few boats pulled into the harbor this eve. I hope we leave on them. The boys that left to guard POWs are still in town.

September 23, Saturday — This was a very pretty day. A couple of squadron men came in from "Repple-Depple" # 7. We went down town to see a show, but Jerry and I finally got in the PBS Club. We got pretty stinko with the secretary-treasurer and his assistant. Now we can go up there whenever we choose.

September 24, Sunday — Today is one week that we've been in this old garrison — it's surely boresome. I got my pass, but I think I'll stay in camp. This is certainly a boresome life. I haven't had such an easy life in ages. I haven't worked for a month, and I guess it'll be another month before I'm assigned to a job.

September 25, Monday — Well, it looks as if they're loading a few boats in the harbor. Gee, it's really rainy and awful weather this AM. I'm thankful that I'm ready to go home, for this winter will be h--- over here. I'd surely like to be home for Kay's birthday, but I won't make it. I hope Lavina will send her some flowers — darn this place!

September 27, Wednesday — Freddy, Head and I went to town today. We saw a show, "Girl Trouble," with Mickey Rooney — not bad, but of course, I had seen it back in McCook. It's very rainy tonight.

September 28, Thursday — There are still quite a few ships in the harbor, but no indications of leaving. Rainy again today. Italy's liquid sunshine, ha! I have an awful cold and was on sick call today. I got some mail from Adeline, Minnie, Mrs. Mitchell — Jim is missing in action. I hope he's okay, but I doubt it. Darn, when will this war end?

September 29, Friday — As usual it rained again today. Freddy, Head, and I saw two good shows, "The Man From Dakota" and "And The Angels Sing." I wrote a letter to Adeline and Mrs. Mitchell. I surely hope Jim will be ok. It is well rumored again that we'll leave in a few days. The "Yank" magazine surely has some facts in it on POWs, etc.

September 30, Saturday — We will have a meeting sometime this AM to check over locator cards — hope it has to do with going home. Gosh, it's raining again. I have a sore eye — hope it won't amount to much. Most of the boys' names were called for shipping orders. I'm going to Fort Meade. I hear that we'll be going Oct 7, 1944. The boys that went to guard POWs are still here. Jerry and Hatfield got in late last night and got 7 days hard labor for it.

October 1, Sunday — It is raining again this AM. I'd like to go to church, but I'm going on sick call for my eye which isn't any better — it acts like a sty to me. Well, the doc put a bandage on my eye and some salve in it. I took the bandage off, and my eye is getting better already.

October 2, Monday — It is continuing to rain every day, but I guess that is Italy. Kelly and some of the boys had to go scrub the liberty boat while the German POWs run around — I don't quite get it all — I just can't understand some things. I went to town this PM to see some shows, "Double Indemnity" and "Step Lively." After the show I had the urge to walk, so took a very long walk by the seashore. It's a lovely night. My old Squadron lost five ships over Vienna recently.

October 3, Tuesday — This is a very pretty day — unusual for this season. I've never seen such long chow lines as they have around here — the food is bad, and the German POWs nearby are getting good food. What Are We Fighting For? I can't quite answer that question — this is too big for me to comprehend. I saw another show this PM — "Destination Tokyo." Tomorrow is Kay's birthday and I haven't sent her a present. Darn, the Army screws things up!

October 4, Wednesday — Today is Kay's birthday, and I'm about 9,000 miles away. I should have been on furlough by this date — at least in the states. I must finish a letter to Kay today — I'll get her a present after I get back to the states. Today is a very pretty day. We're loafing all day as usual. There is a large convoy coming in. I hope we get to go home on it. I think we'll leave about Saturday or Sunday. "Bill" and Gregory are out at Depot #7.

October 5, Thursday — Wow! I think it rained all last night and is still raining today. I hope we leave in a few days, but I heard that it will be the 20th. Yesterday they started giving 10% of us passes rather than 50% as they were doing. There are a few questions I'm going to ask here — Why should we have to wait here so long before going home while they're giving the POWs priority for ships, better food, etc.? I hear that we'll be rubbing elbows with POWs in the states — they'd better keep us over here for we could never do that — in other words, are we fighting for equal rights?

October 6, Friday — Saw a couple shows last night with O'Brian and Weeks. We stopped and drank some wine at the home of a cute girl named Anna. She understands English pretty well. I'm to have a date with her Saturday PM . I feel sorry for some of these Italian families, but they could improve their conditions. You can see a marked change in stores, etc. since last spring. The Army's demobilization plan sounds ok, but I'm wondering when V-day will be. The war news isn't too good. I'd like to return to the states soon, for I think I'd better go to the S. Pacific.

October 7, Saturday — Today we were put on air alert — no more passes. We've exchanged our money, etc. I think we'll leave tomorrow. Darn, I wanted to buy a DFC today. I hope that I see Capt. Brown on the boat so I can get a copy of the orders. Gosh, it's very hot today. It'll surely be swell to get in the states, but I don't expect to stay there long. I've slept so much lately that I can hardly sleep any more. I hope that I can be on furlough for Thanksgiving, but I doubt if I can.

October 8, Sunday — I've looked up my combat time for the MAAF — 237 hours. It really rained a lot last eve and this AM — "sunny" Italy. I had hoped to ship today, but no luck. Wish I could get out to buy me a DFC. I've almost decided to go to college when the war is over. I can go for four years — tuition, etc. paid by government and still receive \$50 per month. I can't decide what courses to pursue, but I have plenty of time to decide before the war is over. I'd like to attend college soon before I get too old.

October 9, Monday — Our room was on KP again today, but Reason and I didn't do a bit of work. We just sat in the storeroom and ate early chow. Tonight most of us loaded on the boats. We're on a nice transport, but it's pretty crowded. The truck drivers got lost out in Naples and we were hours getting down here. The first fellows on the boat get details going home — N-277-1 and 2. They get chow three times a day and we get it twice. These cots surely feel soft as to our former beds.

October 10, Tuesday — This is a nice day, but I didn't go on deck until about 1300. Sure is a good place to sleep. Food is good, but it seems a long time between meals. I think we'll leave the harbor tomorrow or next day. They're still loading the boat. The sailors seem to think we'll be about twelve days going back. I'm going to get plenty of sleep. Wish I had some reading material. Some of the fellows are from Charleston, Spencer, and Fairmont.

October 11, Wednesday — I really slept good last night and I got up about 6:30 this AM. I was on deck when we left the docks about 0715. The chow is very good so far, and all we do is sleep. We can go on deck at anytime we choose. I met Bill tonight and am glad he's along. This ship is really making good time. We have two sub-chasers as escorts. This a grand ride and it isn't a bit rough. We had to turn out lights, etc. at dark as we're in a sub area.

October 12, Thursday — I didn't sleep so good last night, but I slept too much yesterday. Three of us got up about 0530 to take a shower. There is only one fresh-water shower, so we had to take turns. Gee, it was ice cold. I've been reading and on deck all AM. The sea is very calm and beautiful. It's good to stand along the rail and watch the water pass by and to look beyond the horizon and wonder what fate holds for us. It's a peaceful feeling, but the war isn't yet over.

October 13, Friday — Well, today is Friday the thirteenth, but it seems like any other day. We've been moving pretty fast. Today at 1200 we passed the Rock of Gibraltar (Sp). It looks almost as I imagined, but I thought the high bluff faced south instead of north. The ocean is getting much rougher, in fact tonight there was very little sleeping. I found a nice seat on deck and stayed there until nearly dark — it's a grand ride.

October 14, Saturday — It's terrible rough this AM, and they're not letting us on deck as early as usual. It seems that we're to dock in Virginia about next Saturday. I spent most of this day on deck. It was just rough enough to be nice. Most of these fellows have been in combat, and I can't see much change in their attitude. They're not so bitter, but you can tell they're not civilians. I hope each of us get a decent deal in the states, but I guess we must go to the S. P.

October 15, Sunday — Today we are half-way home from Naples. I guess we should be on furlough in about ten days. There isn't much to do on this boat, but the food is grand. It's a little warm below deck though.

October 16, Monday — Bill and I were up on deck all AM. I really think a lot of Bill. I guess he and I are quite alike. He and Jim Mitchell are two of the best pals I've known in the army. Now Jim is MIA. The water hasn't been a bit rough for a few days. I expected it to be worse. It's very, very hot on this boat. That's the worst thing of the trip. I guess we're supposed to dock Saturday AM. I hope it won't be any later than that.

October 17, Tuesday — It was terrible hot last evening — the worst yet that we've ever had. The same this AM. I'm now waiting to go on deck. I spent most of this day on deck, reading books, and most of them are western stories. Tonight was awfully hot below deck. The ventilators aren't working correctly.

October 18, Wednesday — I slept pretty well last night, but I have a slight cold now — due to the changes in temperature from deck to holds. Bill and I were on deck all this morning reading and watching the ocean. It's very rough, and we're approaching a storm. I love to watch the waves when they're high. To look at the great expanse of water makes one realize how small we are in comparison to the things of the universe.

October 19, Thursday — It was terrible hot last night. I'm glad this won't last much longer. Bill and I played cards on deck most of the day. The water is quite calm but

we're to hit a storm off the coast tomorrow evening. Just about one more day and we'll see land. I had a dream about Kay and me last night and also of a girl from New Haven and that the bank was torn down. Bad night!

October 20, Friday — Nothing unusual today. It's still very hot.

October 21, Saturday — Last night was the roughest night we've had. Waves were coming over the deck. It was pretty hard to stay in bed. It's very rough this AM. The whitecaps make a pretty picture against the blue water and black sky. I think we're to dock about 1400. We pulled into the harbor about 1500 and got into the docks about 2130. We're all staying on the boat tonight. After coming so far if seems we should have a priority, but I guess not.

October 22, Sunday — Darn, it was cold last night. I have a heck of a cold. We had K Rations for breakfast. Darn funny reception, eh! I apologize for the above remark. We were treated fine when we left the boat about 1030. We took a train to Patrick Henry and were met by a band, etc. After a brief reception we had a wonderful meal — roast duck, milk, etc. We also had pork chops for supper. I guess this is one thing we've been wanting so long.

October 23, Monday — Saw a show last night — "Song of Bernadette" — it was a good show. I nearly froze last night. We're not used to this climate. We had fresh eggs and cereal for breakfast, and I really appreciate all this fresh milk. I might call Lavina today.



P. O. W. LOG

There were approximately 180 members of the 783rd Squadron in German P.O.W. camps during the war. Each had a somewhat different experience. One man's experience is listed below.

In early January 1945, the Russians started their winter offensive from Warsaw, Poland. Stalag Luft IV was 200 miles northwest of Warsaw. The Russian breakout initiated the evacuation of Luft IV. By February 3, 1945, the front line was forty miles south of Luft IV and extended to the Oder River, forty miles east of Berlin; our only route left for evacuation was northwest through a narrow 50-mile gap to Swinemunde, on the Baltic Sea.(3)

Sergeant James W. McCloskey, on Lt. Greenwood's crew, kept a log of the march from Stalag IV. Here is his log:

"Stalag Luft #4, "A" Lager, Barracks #10, Room #5.

Marched out of "Luft #4", February 6, 1945, arrived at Stalag #357 on March 21, 1945.

Marched out of Stalag # 357 on April 7, 1945. Liberated on May 2, 1945.

Feb. 6 — Left Lager at 8:30 AM. Got one Red Cross parcel, one-third loaf of bread, one-twelfth canned beef, one-fourth pound margarine. No water all day, sat up in barn all night. Walked approximately eighteen miles.

Feb. 7 — Hot water in the morning. Walked approximately fourteen miles.

Feb. 8 — Walked approximately sixteen miles.

Feb. 9 — Rested today, ate steamed spuds, there was an air raid last night.

Feb. 10 — Walked fourteen miles in mud, snow, ice, and water. Heard big guns today.

Feb. 11 — Walked twenty miles. Guns louder, walked all day in same conditions as yesterday, plus rain and hail.

Feb. 12 — Walked six miles. See sign says eighty kilometers to Stettin. Got spuds after dark.

Feb. 13 — Walked twenty-three miles. Rained all day and very cold. Went through Wollin. Walked until 11:00 PM. Slept out in muddy field. Got one-fifth Red Cross parcel.

Feb. 14 — Walked fifteen miles. Crossed river on ferry at Swinemunde.

Feb. 15 — Walked fifteen miles. Through Usedom — left island by bridge.

Feb. 16 — No move today. Had steamed spuds in evening.

Feb. 17 — No move today. Got spud soup.

Feb. 18 — No move today. Got spuds again plus one-sixth loaf of bread and margarine to last three days.

Feb. 19 — Walked fifteen miles — got spuds.

Feb. 20 — No move today — got spuds.

Feb. 21 — Walked ten miles — got two-fifths loaf of bread, margarine, and turnip soup.

Feb. 22 — Walked fifteen miles — walked till 8:00 PM through Dammen.

Feb. 23 — No move today — got spuds and soup.

Feb. 24 — Walked twenty miles. Barricades all along the road. Couple of the guys went to the hospital — unknown what happened to them?.

Feb. 25 — No move today — had spuds and Polish soup.

Feb. 26 — No move today — got spuds, hot water, one-fifth loaf of bread, and some margarine.

Feb. 27 — Same as 26th, but no margarine or bread.

Feb. 28 — No move today — got spud soup.

Mar. 1 — No move today — spuds and Red Cross rations.

Mar. 2 — No move today — stew.

Mar. 3 — Walked ten miles — hot water.

Mar. 4, and 5 — Sat in a barn.

Mar. 6 — Went to Neubrandenburg in a wagon and then came back.

Mar. 7 — Got three-quarters of a loaf of bread, barley and two stews.

Mar. 8 — Had broth, spuds, two brews.

Mar. 9 — Had barley, spuds, water, and broth.

Mar. 10 — Got water, stew, spuds, and almost a loaf of bread.

Mar. 11 — Had water spuds and soup.

Mar. 12 — Same as the 11th.

Mar. 13 — Received one-half loaf of bread, one-eighth Red Cross parcel.

Mar. 14, and 15 — Had water and soup.

Mar. 16 — Got three-quarters loaf of bread

Mar. 17 — We were loaded in boxcars (48 in each).

Mar. 18, and 19 — Rode all day both days.

Mar. 20 — We are in Hamburg station — got one-half loaf of bread, one-third margarine, and wurst.

Mar. 21 — Arrived at "Fallingbostel" Stalag #357 (British Camp).

Apr. 7 — Left #357 — Walked twelve kilometers. Slept in a barn. Four guys made a break (unknown if they made it or not)? Saw dogfight overhead between FW-190 and Typhoon. FW-190 shot down.

Apr. 8 — Stayed at barn. Built a fire and cooked barley, also pea and spud soup. Made tea, left at 2:00 PM, passed through Wietzendorf and slept the night in a barn. Made seven kilometers.

Apr. 9 — Had fried eggs for breakfast. Marched through Meinholtz and Suroerde. Slept this night in a field.

Apr. 10 — Marched eight kilometers through Emmington and Fopingon — slept in a barn.

Apr. 11 — Marched thirteen kilometers through Munzel, Steinbeck, Grevenhof, and Rehrhof — slept in a barn.

Apr. 12 — Marched eighteen kilometers through towns of Wulfsoda, Amelinghausen, Olendorfl, and Luhe. There were Typhoons over us all day, shooting up everything in sight — slept in a barn.

Apr. 13 — Friday — No move all day. Traded soap for eight eggs, onions, and some salt. Cooked a spud, onions, dandelion, and pea soup for dinner. Had barley for breakfast — two fried eggs with boiled spuds for supper.

Apr. 14 — Marched twelve kilometers through towns of Wetzen, Sudergellersen, and Oersen — slept in woods. Got dry rations — one-fifth can Jerry corn beef, dehydrated "swedes", cup of barley and one-fifth margarine.

Apr. 15 — Marched nine kilometers through towns of Ebstort, Deutche-Ebern, Wendischever — slept in a barn. Traded for spuds, one egg, two slices of "brot", onion, and two boxes of matches.

Apr. 16 — Marched fourteen kilometers. Saw air field with JU-88's all bombed and shot up. Marched through towns of Vastorf, Rienstorf and Boltsen — slept in a barn.

Apr. 17 — Got Jerry ration of meal? Traded an old shirt for five eggs, onions, and three slices of bread. Marched ten kilometers through town of Ludersburg. Bought loaf of bread for cigarettes — slept in a barn

Apr. 18 — Got rations of meal, chunk of raw beef, and spuds; traded one cigar for two eggs. Marched thirteen kilometers through town of Hohnstorf, crossed Elbe River at Lauenburg and Boisenburg. Typhoons all over the sky, coming down and strafing any target in sight. For hours you could see and hear Jerry ack-ack batteries firing at them. Bought three boxes of Jerry hard tack biscuits for cigarettes (four biscuits in a box) — slept in a barn.

Apr. 19 — Got spud ration — Traded one cigar for four eggs and one cigarette for bag of onions and bunch of parsnips. Marched eight kilometers today. Typhoons and Tempests are still raising hell and strafing. Flak guns still pounding away at them. Went through town of Rendsdorf today and stayed in Gresse in a barn. Also got bad news today, twenty-eight of our men and six Jerry guards killed out of the group just ahead of us. They were strafed while on the road near a flak battery, by our own planes (Typhoons and Tempests). The good news was, we received a Godsend-two Red Cross parcels per man. Now have six parcels between Howie Landers, Jack Osborne, and me.

Apr. 20 — No move — spent day in Gresse cooking up a storm with Jerry rations and Red Cross parcels. Had a little scare from the fighters. They dove down on us several times, but didn't fire (thank God). They did strafe two wagons carrying Red Cross parcels. During the night a large convoy of Jerry tanks, trucks, heavy guns and other equipment passed by us. Also there was terrific artillery fire close by all night. Tried to sleep in a barn.

Apr. 21 — Walked fourteen kilometers — received more Red Cross packages this morning. Don't quite understand it, but things seem to be changing? Got one parcel for three men. Rained all day, we walked through the towns of Luttenburg, Grevan, Gallin and Valluhn — slept in a barn. Traded coffee for bread and three eggs. Got ration of raw spuds also today. (The allies are only three days away now).

Apr. 22 — No move today. Rained some this morning but cleared up a bit around noon, quite windy also. Bought a bottle of "schnapps" for cigarettes. Also traded cigarettes to a Jerry guard for his ration of margarine and meat. Allies are only three days away, but the Jerries manage to keep us a day or two ahead of our boys. There are a few planes around. Heard guns again all night. The allies are shelling Lauenburg, drove a spearhead to cross the Elbe River. Traded cigarettes to Jerries for three cans of corned beef, three cans of fish, big chunk of cheese, and small and large biscuits — slept in a barn.

Apr. 23 — Walked nine kilometers through towns of Luttow and Schaalmul. Stayed in the town of Kolzin — Pretty cold today, very cloudy and a light rain this morning, sick all day. All night long the allied fighters were flying around.

Good sign we hope. They really hit a train about a mile from our barn. Also a hell of a lot of Jerry ack-ack opposition — slept in a barn.

Apr. 24 — No move today — the sun is out real nice. Saw a couple of Jerry fighters, also allied fighters. Today Landers and I became barbers. We cut a Jerry guard's hair, using razor blades and comb, for half loaf of bread — slept in a barn again.

Apr. 25 — Walked six kilometers through the town of Bantin — slept in a barn. Saw a little air action, "Spits" did some strafing and had a lot of flak thrown at them. It is Wednesday. We bought twenty eggs from the French tonight for coffee.

Apr. 26 — No move today — had fried eggs for breakfast this morning. Had quite a bit of action today. Spits again strafed and bombed a railroad about half-mile from us. We could see the bombs go off. Bought some rolled oats from a GI for cigarettes and bought one quarter loaf of bread, little piece of margarine, some head cheese, and some salt from a Jerry guard for cigarettes. Heard a lot of heavy artillery last night. "Hurry up boys, this old life is getting monotonous."

Apr. 27 — No move today — had fried eggs on toast for breakfast. It is a little chilly today. Bought forty more eggs from a Frenchman for coffee.

Apr. 28 — No move again today. Wonder what is going on? Had egg omelet with spam in it today, plus coffee, cereal, prunes, and two crackers with peanut butter on them for breakfast. Miserable day, rainy and windy. Rumor today — Yanks supposed to have crossed the Elbe River at Lauenburg and are only twenty-seven kilometers from us.

Apr. 29 — Marched at 1:00 PM, went two kilometers and back in to Batin, stayed at barn in real small groups. Kind of figured something was up? Got one quarter Red Cross parcel before we left. "Spits" just went over again and we still are sweating them out as they are shooting up everything in sight. Hurry up Yanks get this dam war over with. Cloudy and cold today. Had coffee and cereal this morning.

Apr. 30 — Marched at 3:00 PM, fourteen kilometers through town of Zarrentin — Stayed in a barn.

May 1 — Miserable day, snowed this morning, mud and slush every where. Made some cookies out of Jerry flour, margarine, salt, sugar, water, and a vitamin pill. The snow turns to rain and rains all afternoon and night.

May 2 — Beautiful day today — had coffee and made cookies for breakfast. Traded with Jerry soldiers, running from the front lines, cigarettes for bread. Then at 3:30 PM the greatest thing in our lives happened! Someone out on the road **YELLED "HERE COMES A JEEP"**. No one could believe it, but up the road came a jeep with two British Soldiers in it! They had the guns and not the Jerries this time. We almost went mad, such cheering and yelling was never heard anywhere! The soldiers in the jeep told us we were **FREE!** We rounded up the Jerry guards and Jerry soldiers out and around the country side and disarmed them. Then an armored truck came up and took them away. Our boys then went into the chicken coops, killed and cleaned chickens and roasted them. The forced labor workers, Russian, French, Ukrainians, Polish, and others gave us milk, bread, etc. One old German woman took our three rations of flour and made us cakes. We ate them with jam on them — We were liberated at **Hackendorf!**

May 3 — We left Hackendorf at 8:00 AM. Rode four kilometers on a wagon with "Dutch" refugees, and walked four kilometers through Hollenbek to Gudow and caught a wagon to Buchen where we had our first white bread and army stew in ten months. This meal was provided at a British cook-house especially for POW's. We then rode wagons through Zweedorf and Nostorf to Lauenburg. From Buchen to Lauenburg were nothing but signs of fighting, houses burned and shelled, bridges blown out, railroad blown up, wrecked rail cars, etc. Outside of Lauenburg, about four miles, the road was jammed and blocked with Jerry equipment. On and along the road there were tanks, trucks, "amphibians", ducks, half-tracks, jeeps, recons, radio and command trucks, motorcycles, and anything else you might name. There were also guns, artillery pieces, small arms and all kinds of ammo. Such wreckage can hardly be imagined. British soldiers were stopping Jerry soldiers and taking watches, knives, and most everything else from them. The road was also jammed with thousands of POW's, German Soldiers, British guards, and refugees. It was one big mess! In the town of Lauenburg, the streets were also jammed with people, buildings were in ruins, and the streets were all torn up. The bridge which crosses the Elbe was blown out and the only bridge was a pontoon bridge. We got a truck, after kicking out the Jerry soldiers, and started across the bridge for Luneburg which was about twenty kilometers. From Lauenburg to Luneburg was already lined with German soldiers walking and the British MP told us that for seven hours there had been a steady stream of Jerries, twenty kilometers long and thousands more coming, it was hard to imagine. The German soldiers were coming from all across the country-side to turn themselves in to the British. At Luneburg, we went to a British center for POW's. There we filled in the registration cards. We got a small issue of clothes, shirt, pair of socks, shorts, towel, soap, toothbrush, and tobacco. We then went to the

"delouser", took cold showers and got sprayed with "delousing powder". We then got three blankets and mess equipment. By the time we got through with all this and got something to eat, it was

1:30 AM

May 4 — At 7:00 AM, we were told to eat breakfast and fall out at 8:15 AM for transfer to another camp. We rode in "GI" trucks for about 150 miles to a British sub corps camp. We were issued straw sacks, blankets and more mess equipment. This morning I finally met up with Sammy, Charlie, and Clutts. Five of us together in a tent now here at Solingen.

May 5 — Stayed at the center till noon. We were supposed to ship out but no transportation. Clutts went to the hospital. Landers, Sammy, Charlie and I went to our first movie in eleven months. The picture was "Princess O'Rouke" with Olivia DeHaviland and Robert Cummings.

May 6 — Got up at 5:30 AM and ate breakfast. At 6:15 AM got on trucks and went eighty miles through Osnabruke to another British center for POW's at Emsdetten. Had the best meal since becoming a POW. The meal was mashed spuds, steak, peas, gravy, bread, tea, and stewed prunes in milk.

May 7 — Had breakfast of porridge, tea, bread, butter, jam and ham. Its a beautiful day — had doughnuts this afternoon given out by Red Cross girls. Listened to radio at camp and heard some real fine music.

May 8 — Another beautiful day. Four of us went to a German farm house and told them we wanted some eggs. We had two fried eggs, two slices of bread fried, and a couple of cups of milk. We gave the people some English cigarettes, then came back to camp.

May 9 — Its another beautiful day — swell breakfast and then Charlie and I walked over to the swimming pool near camp. Its a beautiful Olympic size pool.

May 10 — Ate breakfast and got orders to ship out. We went to the airport and got on a British Lancaster, thirty men to a plane, and flew to a field about fourteen kilometers from Brussels, Belgium. Rode from the field to Brussels to another POW center of the British. Got some clothing, a bed, food, and \$20.00 pay in Franc's. Went into Brussels and had a good time. The people have been celebrating the end of the war for days now with dances, fireworks and all kinds of entertainment. Got back to camp at
2:00 AM.

May 11 — Finally got orders to ship — went by truck to Brussels and boarded a train for

Namur, Belgium. Got all new GI clothes, partial pay, some GI equipment and of course a typhus shot. We are finally in the hands of the American Forces.

May 12 — Its a beautiful morning — excellent breakfast — just laid around all day.

May 13 — Got on truck at noon to go to the railroad station. Got aboard a Hospital Train headed for St. Valerie, France about forty miles from LeHavre, France.

May 14 — At 2:00 AM this morning the train stopped at a town where we got off and had a chicken dinner. Rode the train all day and reached St. Valerie about 6:00 PM. Got on truck and rode about three miles to Camp Lucky Strike. At the present time there are about 50,000 POW's here.



MY CAREER AT KREIGEFANGENEN NO. 7181
(GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR)

■ 1st LT Woodrow W. Browning, 0-682-459

7 Aug 44 — At approximately 11:32 AM on this day it was "Bombs Away" over the North Oil Refinery of the Blechhammer oil refineries located near the city of Kosel and about 40 seconds later smoke started gushing up into the sky. We knew that the smoke indicated that our bombs had "struck oil" and Hitler's oil reserves and production were being damaged. This refinery, located on the Oder river in Upper Silesia, is about 125 miles SE of Breslau, Germany. But while this was going on the Germans weren't just standing by watching. Numerous flak (anti-aircraft) puffs of smoke began to fill the sky and the famous German "ACK-ACK" (anti-aircraft) guns were getting quite a workout. At approximately 30 seconds past 11:33 we received a direct hit from one of the 88 MM guns. The old Liberator ("Nobody's Baby") seemed to be thrown up in the air. And the sound from the explosions told us that we had been hit bad. I turned around and could see the flames about 3 feet away. The nose wheel accumulator behind the nose wheel was burning fiercely and about that time the Navigator (Lt. Charles J. Conlin) yelled, "Get out of here". He assisted me in the removal of my flak suit and pulled the emergency release handle on the nose wheel door. I then went out on my back.

It was quite something going out into space. I remained on my back and had the feeling that I was just floating along. I was scared, particularly because there were "dogfights" going on (My parachute received a bullet hole in after I had opened it) and the flak hadn't completely stopped. When I figured that I was clear of the plane and the flak area, I pulled my ripcord but nothing happened. I was really concerned — but I had the presence of mind to call on MY LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST — the Spirit said "Pull a little harder" and I pulled about an inch more and I heard the flutter of the pilot chute and then felt the terrific jerk when the main chute opened up. It was a sense of relief to feel that "jerk" because you knew that the old parachute was functioning. The white canopy over my head was indeed beautiful. Well, I had scarcely gotten settled down, or

I should say my nerves had scarcely gotten settled when my chute started popping, and I became concerned that it might close up on me, so I prayed some more. Yes, I imagine most people call upon The LORD when they are in a similar situation.

My chute more or less settled down after awhile and I was drifting down into enemy territory. What an awful feeling! I felt as though The GOOD LORD and all the people had forsaken me, but I realized later that HE was right there with me all the time. As mentioned earlier about the bullet hole or piece of flak in my parachute — I heard what sounded like a bullet hit and looked up to see the hole in my chute. But the chute was well made — it did not rip. I thought at that time that the Germans might be shooting from the ground, but later I felt that it was probably during one of the "dogfights" going on in the target area.

While floating down I saw another Liberator plane which had been shot down from the group ahead of us. It had made a pancake landing and was burning.

I had thoughts while floating down. I thought of how worried my wife and family would be when they received the "MIA" (Missing-In-Action) notice from the War Department. I also thought about a letter which I had written to our first son (Clyde) a couple of days before.

As I came down to earth the wind seemed to have died completely and my chute folded up nicely on the ground. I landed in a field which had some kind of grain (wheat, oats, etc.) in it. It was rather a smooth landing although I hit pretty hard on my left foot. Very shortly after I landed a German soldier with civilians came up. The soldier took me into a small town for interrogation. Then I was put in a small room and kept until about 3:00 PM at which time I was taken by truck to another town. In this truck also was one of the gunners from my crew and the bombardier and navigator of the plane shot down in the group ahead of us. We arrived at the town of Neustadt and were searched again and then place in jail cells. That night the Germans gave us some margarine, sausage, and lousy German (black) bread. I really was hungry, but I could only eat a bite or two of that German bread. After an overnight stay in the jail (also the next day) we departed in the evening to the railroad station and started a trip to Frankfurt on the Main. Our route took us through Oppeln, Gorlitz, Breslau, Dresden, Leipzig, Weimar, and Erfurt. We arrived in a couple of days.

Frankfurt (on the Main River) was an interrogation center for prisoners of

war. Then we were taken to Wetzler which is a distribution point for Air Force prisoners of war. I was happy to see that all members of the two crews who were shot down four days ago (from our squadron) had gotten out safely. I later found out that seven of our crew bailed out safely — the pilot (who stayed with the ship so we could bail out and did not get out because he was trying to save the other two), the co-pilot and the engineer-top gunner did not make it. (Note: Lt. Bates, the pilot, was awarded the Silver Star, posthumously, for his acts of heroism.)

I found "Chief" Elliott there at Wetzler. He had been shot down before we were. I had flown several missions with him and he was a good friend. The bombardier and navigator from another of our crews as well as some of the enlisted gunners were there also. We arrived at Wetzler on 13 Aug 44 and received our first issue of Red Cross supplies. We were also able to take a bath, shave, and put on clean clothes. Seemed like "Xmas" as each prisoner was given a cardboard suitcase, 1 suit underwear, 1 sweater, 1 bottle cascara pills, American cigarettes, pipe, pipe tobacco, pipe cleaners, face and laundry soap, razor blades, shaving soap, razor, tooth brush and tooth powder, trousers, shirt, army blouse and overcoat. (Most of the clothing was furnished by the US Army to the Red Cross.) We also received vitamin pills, socks, and toilet tissue.

I missed my old leather jacket that I had carried on every mission whether I was wearing it or not. It was sort of a good luck piece I guess. I had received a new testament form my sister Hazel for Xmas 1942 and I carried that testament in the pocket of the jacket. Inside the testament was a picture of my wife Cathy and son Clyde. But I didn't think of picking it up when I had to bail out.

14 Aug 44 — Departed for Stalag Luft III located at Sagan, Germany. Chief Elliott, Joe Coote, Bill Teller, Lloyd Clark from my group, and others from different groups boarded the train for our new "home". I would guess that there were about 120 in the group that headed for Stalag Luft III.

16 Aug 44 — Arrived at Stalag Luft III — this is located at Sagan northwest of Breslau and southeast of Berlin. We were assigned to the North Compound and Chief and I were assigned to the same room (Room 9, Barracks 103). Found Jim Connell (Chief's navigator) and Larry Crane from our group.

The North Compound consisted mostly of RAF personnel and personnel flying with the RAF, such as RAAF, NZAF, RCAF, and others. There were about 400 Americans in this compound, which is similar to the other compounds (East, South, West & Center) with fifteen barracks (or as the

British say, "blocks") in rows of three. The barracks were divided into different rooms with 2 or 3 assigned to the smaller rooms and up to 8 or 10 in the larger rooms. There were six others besides Chief and me in our room. We originally had 4 double decker bunks and this was changed to two triple decker and one double decker. It was rather crowded in these rooms since they weren't larger than an ordinary living room. We had F/Lt Dan Shuman of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) — he lived in Stateboro, Georgia, before going up to Canada to join the RCAF before the US had entered the war; F/Lt Kenneth Anthony, RCAF; F/Lt Percy Toft, RCAF; F/Lt Jungowski who was a member of the Polish Air Force who had fled to England and started flying with the RAF; F/Lt Ian Kingwell of the RAF; and F/Lt Lou Grant of the RCAF. In the compound was also a building which was used for a communal kitchen and store room. The kitchen issued out supplies and gave out hot water 3 times a day for making coffee, tea, or cocoa. But each room did its own cooking.

Also in the compound was a theater building which the prisoners had built with the Germans supplying the materials. There was a road or track around the inside of the compound where prisoners walked or ran for exercise. Also in the compound were basketball courts, softball courts, baseball, cricket (English game), and places to play other games, such as handball, badminton, etc. The YMCA had furnished most of the athletic equipment with some other being received by prisoners in packages from home.

We were left more or less alone in this camp. The Germans held roll call and count twice daily and now and then the "Ferrets" (German security police) would run all of the prisoners out of the barracks and give the building a search. We were permitted to write 3 letters and 4 postcards (VMail) each month and to receive as much mail as the Germans felt like bringing into camp (when it was able to get through to us). German food rations were mostly 7/6 loaf bread per man per week (1/6 per day), some potatoes, a small amount of margarine, sugar and occasionally green vegetables, honey and a few other items. We got meat now and then. The meat issue was run on a roster by rooms. Our room got meat (usually beef) about 3 times in the 5 months at Stalag Luft III. When supplies were available we got a Red Cross parcel per week which consisted mainly of 1 can powdered milk (about 1 lb), 4 ounces chocolate, 1 lb cheese, 1 box K-2 crackers, 2 ounces powdered coffee, 1 can jam or peanut butter, 1/2 lb sugar, 2 bars face soap, 1 can spam, pream, or similar canned lunch meat, 1 can cornbeef, 1 can salmon or 2 cans sardines, 5 pkgs American cigarettes, 1 lb margarine, and 1 lb raisins.

28 Aug 44 — Went to sick quarters to have a boil lanced (was bitten by a horse fly) and stayed there. I managed to read quite a bit there. Was surprised one day when I was asked to go to a room to see a patient and who should it be but SSgt Al Yatakauskas who was the tail gunner on the crew that I was shot down with. He had been shot in the leg and had to have it amputated. He later on was repatriated home. I also got to see Joe Collins (from my Cadet Class at Big Spring). He was shot down in 1943. The German doctor checked on the patients now and then but mostly left it up to the allied doctors who are prisoners. (The British name for the Germans was "Goons").

14 Sep 44 — Returned to the compound from sick quarters. Lt. Charley Conlin, our navigator, had arrived in the Center Compound.

Got to see the British stage production at the theater. It was a musical entitled "Messalina" and depicted the life of the Emperor Claudius. I had seen one before entitled "Palina Panic" on the 18th of Aug. The British did a wonderful job with the limited facilities they had.

October 44 — Nothing much doing now — doing lots of reading. Saw a band show put on by an orchestra organized in the camp. YMCA had furnished the instruments. Also got to see some nice softball games with the Canadian All Stars beating the American All Stars. Got to see my first game of cricket — the popular game in England. Also another theater production entitled "Thark".

Nov 44 — Armistice Day — We observed a 2 minute silence at 11:00 AM. Saw a good dramatic play "Flashing Stream", which depicted life at a British Naval Base.

12 Nov 44 — First snow.

20 Nov 44 — Received my first letter today — from my sister, Vicy.

21 Nov 44 — We had kept a certain amount of food in reserve for emergency but orders came out today to use it all up so we really had some nice feeds or as the British would say "a Bash". To be on the safe side, though, we hid about 16 pounds of raisins in cans in the ground.

1 Dec 44 — YMCA brought an American film into camp — it was "The Spoilers" with John Wayne, Marlene Dietrich, and Randolph Scott.

Chocolate candy is beginning to sell for high prices. A British guy was offering \$20.00

per pound. Of course there is no money transaction — the buyer would just give a check for the amount to be cashed upon liberation.

7 Dec 44 — Another play — "The Importance of Being Earnest"

21 Dec 44 — Finally got that letter that I had been awaiting for a long time — from my darling wife, Cathy and our son, Butch.

XMAS WEEK — Getting full issue of parcels this week. Part regular and part Christmas parcels. We exchanged our regular parcels for Christmas parcels and ended up with each one in the room having a Christmas parcel. Also, one of the guys in the room, F/Lt Kingwell, had 5 personal parcels which he had received from his home in storage so he got them out for Christmas. The American Christmas parcel had boned turkey, Vienna sausage, wash cloth, pipe, tobacco, plum pudding, deviled ham, preserve butter, dates, mixed nuts, mixed candy, chewing gum, a game (cribbage, chess, or similar game), honey, cheese, jam, cherries. — A very wonderful parcel.

25 Dec 44 — Christmas in Germany as guest of the German Luftwaffe — Our menu for the day: Breakfast — cereal, bread, coffee, baked beans with pork, Vienna sausage; Noon (Dinner) — Boned turkey, dressing, plum jam, onion sauce, beets, carrots, tea, fruit cake, plum pudding, noodle soup, bread; Supper — fruit cake, mince meat pie, coffee. We had turkey for 3 good meals. The puddings also lasted for 3 meals. Had singing at the theater. "The Messiah" was presented during the Christmas week.

31 Dec 44 — Saw the production of "The Drunkard" which would have really been good if the actors could have been slightly drunk. The show ended about midnight and we had a singing session afterward. The Germans gave no special food to the prisoners this year. They didn't seem concerned whether they had Christmas or not. But the Red Cross parcels made our Christmas brighter.

11 Jan 45 — Saw an American film, "The Male Animal," with Olivia de Haviland, Jack Carson, and Henry Fonda.

The German official news summary (the O K W — or in German "Das Oberkammando der Wehrmacht gibt Bekannt") translated in American language means "The high command of the armed forces gives or makes known" have been mentioning the Russians on the Eastern Front. They seem to expect Joe Stalin to start a big drive.

15 Jan 45 — OKW announced "Soviet Begonnen Gross Angriff" or "The Soviets have begun a major offensive on the Eastern Front." This brought new hopes that we could be liberated by the Russians.

17 Jan 45 — Our second wedding anniversary and I am a long ways from Cathy.

20 Jan 45 — What a thrill! — 5 letters from my darling wife with pictures of her and our son "Butch". Gosh, it makes me feel good! Also got a letter from Elzie Williams.

The Russians are still driving and we are still hoping that we will be liberated. Little do we know that our hopes will be blasted very shortly.

24 Jan 45 — at 2100 (9:00 PM) it was announced officially that the Germans were moving us out of Stalag Luft III. What a cruel blow this was! — we were hoping against hope that we would be liberated. The weather is below freezing and snow and ice cover the ground. Some people also went wild with preparations for the move. We made a sled to carry our clothes, etc.

28 Jan 45 — At about 0215 (2:15 AM) we were issued parcels and marched out for destination "unknown". Snow was nice for our sleds but not to walk on. We marched to Friedwaldav which is about 29 kilometers (18 miles) from Stalag Luft III. We were to stay here overnight, but the Germans decided to move to the next town which is about 6 kilometers. We moved to that town and stayed in the stable there.

29 Jan 45 — Left out at about 0900 and marched to Muskau. Three hundred of us stopped at a French camp.

31 Jan 45 — Remained at the French POW camp for a couple of days — left at 1400 (2:00 PM) to go with the other Americans. Saw Owen Livesay. Spent the night at Graustein.

1 Feb 45 — Arrived at Spremberg — stayed overnight and loaded on a train next morning.

2 Feb 45 — With 40 or 50 men to one small French boxcar and the weather being very cold, this was the roughest part of the trip yet.

4 Feb 45 — Arrived at Stammlager XIII located at Nuremberg. On the train trip we went from Spremberg — Blesti — Uhland — Elsterwalda — Priestla — Groditz — Riesa — Cheminz — Weimer — Erfurt — Helsbruk — Ausgang — Nurenber.

5 Feb 45 — Nothing much of interest — Have seen quite a few of my friends including Bill Vorhies, Don Henry, Max Sketika, Frank Winands, John Spargo. George Davis is sleeping right above me in our barracks. There are 25 men to eat and sleep in a room about the size of an ordinary living room. Some are sleeping on tables — some on the floor. Food is pretty scarce.

15 Feb 45 — RAF made a night raid over Nuremberg — it was scary.

20, 21, 22 Feb 45 — 8th AF raided Nuremberg, bombing the marshalling yards. The yards are about three miles from us and it got a bit scary.

26 Feb 45 — One of the RAF bombs hit close to the camp tonight.

27 Feb 45 — Potato ration cut — RAF scares the life out of us again.

28 Feb 45 — RAF over Nuremberg again.

5 Mar 45 — Bread ration cut again to 1/7 loaf per man per day — potato ration is 2 per day.

8 Mar 45 — Snowing for 7th straight day — We are now getting German field ration bread (hardtack) for 2 days per week.

9 Mar 45 — Snowing again.

Nothing of unusual interest has happened except bombing raids. Food is scarce — No Red Cross parcels in camp. Everyone seems to be getting nervous and jumpy from the bombings and lack of food. The RAF raids by the RAF are particularly nerve wracking. One night they came over and lit up the city. They also dropped a string of flares around our camp and we thought that they were going to bomb us, but we found out later that the flares around the camp were for our protection — the bombers had orders not to cross the line of flares. It looked like a 4th of July celebration with the sky lit up, bombs bursting, aircraft being hit, etc.

14 Mar 45 — Nice weather — Red Cross trucks arrive in camp with food — sunshine. What more could you ask for except to be liberated. You could almost shed tears of joy when the food truck showed up.

Nuremberg is under almost constant air alert — the 8th AF come over during the day — the RAF at night — this previously beautiful city is probably mostly rubble now. It is becoming evident more and more each day that Germany

can't feed the prisoners they have but they continue to bring more to this camp. Our rations are very poor — the Red Cross with their truck (American government loaned them the trucks) are keeping us in food. We get very little from the Germans.

17 Mar 45 — Cathy's birthday — her 20th and the 2nd one that I have been away from her.

20 Mar 45 — RAF over for third straight night.

24 Mar 45 — Got an extra issue of parcels today — French Red Cross parcels were issued on basis of one parcel per 12 men. The French parcels contained some rich food — one contained 1 can condensed milk, 5 cans sardines, 6 cans fruit jams, 2 lbs sugar, 2 lbs biscuits, four 2-ounce pkgs of French tobacco. Another one contained 1 lb honey cake, 2 lbs biscuits (cracker), 1 large can fruit jam, 1 lb cocoa, 1/2 meat pate, 1/2 lb chocolate, 1 large candy bar, 1/2 lb sugar, 1 pkg candy.

25 Mar 45 — Hitler called up the 14-year-old boys and girls in a proclamation over the German radio. The boys were to go to combat — the girls to war jobs — Germany is in bad shape and is getting desperate — the Americans are on the move from the west.

28 Mar 45 — German news report that allies are still driving toward Nuremberg which means we will probably be on the move soon — in fact the excitement about moving has already begun.

29 Mar 45 — Situation has settled down somewhat.

3 Apr 45 — Well, we are moving tomorrow — seems as though we are always moving ahead of the allies. Wish they would hurry and catch up with us so we can be liberated. The Germans are more prepared for this move as they announced the route and stops which we will make and the destination to which we are headed.

4 Apr 45 — On our way — we were at Nuremberg for 2 months — we are now headed for Moosberg located northeast of Munich. First day's trip included Feucht, Ochenbruch, Pfeiferhutte, Oberferrieden, Postbauer, and Polling where we stayed overnight. And we were in our usual place — in a barn. We covered about 25 kilometers.

5 Apr 45 — Left Polling about 0900 and went to Nuemarkt. We stopped there for a few hours and saw the planes pass over going to bomb Nuremberg. We could

hear the bombs bursting. It was a beautiful day — sunny and nice temperature. We are issued 1/9 loaf of bread, a little honey, and small cup of soup. We stopped in a forest till dark so we could travel at night and not have the danger of being strafed by our own planes. Went on to the city of Berching and stayed overnight in a church. Berching is one of the old cities of Germany. It was partially walled in — distance — about 24 kilometers.

6 Apr 45 — Departed Berching at approximately 1430 (2:30 PM). After being issued 1/2 parcel (British Red Cross), 1/7 loaf German bread, and a little honey, we went through Pranksteten (we passed another group of Americans here including Owen Livesay, Bill Vorhies, and others who had left out ahead of us) — Beilingries, Paulushoffen (which is at the top of a small mountain which, of course, we had to walk up), Altamandorf, and arrived at Ponsdorf about midnight. We have covered 24 kilometers on this leg, but it was about the roughest day so far on this trip. It had rained quite a bit and our packs as well as our clothing were soaked which, needlessly to say, made things heavier. We settled in our barn for the night. But no one cared where we stopped — just as long as we stopped.

7 Apr 45 — Germans decided to give us a day's rest and permit the others behind to catch up. Quite a few of the guys stopped at towns behind us, mostly at Beilingries, and came on the next day. The farmer who owned the barn gave us all the potatoes we wanted and permitted us to heat water and boil as many potatoes as we desired. It was real nice of him to do that; he had a boiler in a little shed that he permitted us to use as well as his wood. The German civilians we encountered on this trip were rather friendly to my surprise. The guards permitted us to trade almost at will with the civilians so we used soap, cigarettes, chocolate, coffee, and tea from our Red Cross parcels for eggs, flour, potatoes, etc. This is known as "scrounging" in Krieg language. A few American cigarettes, a bar of soap, a little tea, coffee, or cocoa would get eggs, milk, potatoes, or even a loaf of the better German bread (which is much better than our ration bread). When trading with men we use cigarettes and with women we use soap, coffee, tea, or cocoa. The chocolate candy when trading goes real well with children. Swan soap was used almost exclusively in American Red Cross parcels and it was very good for trading with the Germans. American cigarettes were better than other cigarettes for trading also. The march was doing most of use some good although it was hard at first, but with the guards permitting us to trade, a few of us probably gained a pound or two. With the Germans furnishing practically no food for us, the parcels and trading kept us going.

8 Apr 45 — Left Ponsdorf about 0900, and the weather was just fine. Nice sunshine that is drying out our clothes and our packs. Our spirits are revived somewhat — we feel that it is just a matter of time before the Germans have to surrender — we still have hopes of the advancing American troops liberating us. Our trip this day took us through Schanhaupten, Sandersdorf, Mindelstetten, Forcheim, Marching, and then we crossed the Danube river and stopped at the town of Neustadt. I had been over the Danube a few times by air, crossing it going over into Rumania and sometimes to Vienna, but this was my first trip by land (on foot) crossing "The Blue Danube". But very few ,if any, had the energy or ambition to "waltz" as we went over the river. The Germans had placed explosives on the bridge so it could be destroyed ahead of the American troops. We stopped out in a field and were going to stay there for sometime until we could get on a train and go the rest of the way to Moosberg. We weren't too happy about this because we knew how it was to be cramped up in a boxcar — jammed as close as cattle. But our main worry was that the train would be attacked by allied fighter planes — we saw them almost everyday on our march going about looking for targets, such as trains, trucks, etc. Since the German guards were in command we could do nothing about the decision to go by train. We had gotten settled down when overhead four P-47 Thunderbolts started looking us over. Boy what excitement! — and what an eerie feeling prevailed over the entire group. The fighters evidently were trying to determine if it was a group of German soldiers, and if so, they would have strafed. There was no place to run, and even if we did run, it might make the pilots think we were soldiers, and then it would be "Katy, bar-the-door". The senior American officers ordered a large POW be placed on the ground with our white sheets. When we left Nurenberg we took some white sheets to be used for signaling or some similar use in case of emergency. Also we could use them for bandages if needed. The planes left after the POW was placed on the ground. What a relief it was to see them fly away! (Incidentally, P-51 aircraft kept track of us through the entire march — coming over each day to check our location.) After the planes departed the German captain (Hauptman) in charge ordered us to get ready to move. He decided that we had better move out before other planes came over and ended up strafing us. It was a relief to know that we would not be jammed in boxcars, and have the possibility of being strafed. It was late but we marched to Muhlhausen — we covered 20 kilometers this day.

9 Apr 45 — Left out from Muhlhausen about 1000. We were now getting into the farm lands of Bavaria which were pretty. There were small hills and valleys, and at this time of the year the wheat and other grains were real green. And it was so quiet and peaceful — it just didn't seem that a war was still

going on. The people were very friendly; this part of Germany had never been bombed because there were no military targets here. Small towns and farms were all you saw. The civilians seemed to be ready for the war to be over also. Our trip took us through Sigenberg, Erlach, and in the afternoon we stopped at the town of Schweinbach, where we were issued 1/2 Red Cross parcel. We got settled down at a nice farm about 1600 (4:00PM) and had nothing to do but prepare supper and go to sleep. The lady at the farm permitted us to cook on her stove in her kitchen, and we managed to get some eggs from her for breakfast. She was very nice. We traveled only 10 kilometers today.

10 Apr 45 — Left Schweinbach at about 1030 (10:30 AM) and got a small ration of bread. Trip took us through Ludmansdorf, Pfefferhausen, Oberfussbach, Obermunchen, and stopped overnight at Gammelsdorf. Covered 21 kilometers today. Going through one of the many small towns, a German lady threw some bread out the window to us. At most of the towns the civilians put water out by the roadside so we could have a drink.

11 & 12 Apr 45 — Stayed in Gammelsdorf. Did quite a bit of trading with civilians these two days. Ran into some French POWs who were working on German farms. They thought we had escaped as we were some distance from Gammelsdorf while trading.

13 Apr 45 — Left out this morning on the last leg of the journey. We had really enjoyed the rest the two days had provided, but good things come to an end. It was a dreary day, and to make it more dreary, we received word that our beloved President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died. Our journey took us through Durnieboldorf, Pfettrach, Ziegberg, and we arrived at Moosberg in the afternoon, covering 11 kilometers today.

MOOSBERG — STALAG LUFT VII — At last we came to the end of the second "forced" march. This march had been quite different from the other. This one had been organized. This was partly due to the fact that the German captain (Hauptman) in charge wasn't like the typical German officer. He planned it so that it was not so hard on us. He was an Austrian born officer who supposedly lived in Vienna. We had covered about 144 kilometers which equals about 90 miles. But it was certainly nice that we used 10 days to get here. Ten days out from behind barbed wire, but now we were back behind the fence again. Barbed wire everywhere you look. We were quartered in large tents. After getting settled down most of us started looking for buddies whom we thought we had seen. I finally found Charlie Conlin, our navigator, and the ball gunner, Sgt Wilby. Also Joe

Collins and Jones who were with me in cadet training. Ran into Bill Mitchel, Jack Hartman, and some others from our group. Quite a reunion of the 465th Bomb Group, especially my squadron (783rd Bomb Sqdn).

23 Apr 45 — This was a red letter day! It was officially announced that the Germans had agreed not to move any more POWs in face of the allied advances. This meant that we would just wait until the Americans took Moosberg and liberated us. We were getting excited!

28 Apr 45 — News that a "Free Movement" had taken over the radio station in Munich — had ordered all fighting in Bavaria (of which Munich is the capital) to cease. But later that day the Gestapo had eliminated the "free movement" and the war was still on. But rumors were flying high now. Rumors late at night claimed that American tanks were only five kilometers away. That meant about three miles. We saw the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) guard moving with packs so we knew something was in the air.

29 April 1945 — LIBERATION DAY — Yes, this was the day we had been waiting for since we became POWs. When we awoke and saw that the Regular Army guard had taken over the camp we were disappointed. We had seen the Luftwaffe guards leave and thought that all Germans had gone, but the next morning the Wehrmacht (German Army) troops were patrolling. At about 0930 we heard a machine gun cut loose. Part of the guys ran for trenches and part ran into buildings — part just fell on the ground. A few bullets came down through our camp. Then we heard tanks shooting and some of the guys could see them on the hills. The battle took place about 300 or 400 yards away. At about 1230 (12:30 PM), we saw the American flag raised down in Moosberg which was about two miles away. The town had been captured. It was a wonderful feeling — just made you want to sit down and cry like babies! I don't know if anyone did, but I certainly felt like it. We were FREE — FREE! The sight of the beautiful "Stars and Stripes" made you feel so wonderful — feel all choked up inside. Made you think of your wife, your son, your home, good things to eat. Later a tank came in with the American troops, and the crowd went wild. General Patton came in to visit.

7 May 1945 — Flown out of Germany from airport at Landshut — landed at Reims, France. Later went by train to LeHavre and boarded a ship for the U.S.. We had been paid — we had new clothes and good food — and we were on the SS John Erickson going from LeHavre, France to New York on 16 May 1945. Stopped at Southampton, England and left there on 19 May 1945. Arrived in New York 29 May 1945. What a glorious day to arrive on American soil. Called my wonderful wife, Cathy, from Camp Shanks,

N.Y. — also the family. Left for Fort Sam Houston, Texas, on 30 May 1945. Arrived there on 2 June 1945 and left that afternoon to meet Cathy and Butch in Dallas. Arrived there in the morning, Sunday, 3 June 1945 — Cathy and Butch were there waiting. So ends the story of German Prisoner of War (Kriegefangen) No. 7181.



How to Fly THE B-24D AIRPLANE

First and of foremost importance, you are the Pilot; the lives of your crew and successful completion of your mission are in your hands. Use good judgment and common sense. The airplane is a piece of machinery and will react exactly as you direct. It will not fight back nor argue with you, so do not get mad at it; it only affects your own reactions and corresponding ability to fly.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

Fuselage Height	10' 5"
Overall Span	110' 0"
Overall Length	66' 4"
Overall Height	17' 11"
Height, Inboard Propeller Hub	8' 8"
Height, Outboard Propeller Hub	9' 1"
Clearance, Inboard Propeller Tip to Ground	2' 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Clearance, Outboard Propeller Tip to Ground	3' 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Clearance, Propeller Tip to Fuselage	1' 9"
Clearance, Inboard to Outboard Propeller Tips	2' 6"
Clearance, Propeller to Wing Leading Edge	6' 2 $\frac{1}{16}$ "
Clearance, Bottom of Fuselage to Ground	1' 8"
Capacity, Main Fuel Tanks	2343 Gallons
Auxiliary Tanks	<u>450</u> Gallons
TOTAL	2793 Gallons

The following text on flying the B-24 airplane is based on experiences of Consolidated pilots with many thousands of hours flying time in cooperation with officials of the U.S. Army Air Corps with their wide experience in flight training procedure.

The B-24 airplane is not difficult to fly. It has no vicious characteristics and when the pilot learns the difference in "feel," due to its size, weight, and speed range, flying it is no more of a problem than flying a trainer. A large bomber is a highly complicated piece of equipment containing many compartments. Learn your airplane; study the functional operations of the several systems and the mystery of imagined complexities will become surprisingly simple. A little time devoted to the fundamentals of what makes it "tick" will pay amazing dividends in psychological reaction and peace of mind.

Master the airplane, don't let it master you, but — never lose respect for it.

Inspect your airplane before take-off or be sure competent hands have accomplished the pre-flight check.

When engines reach the proper operating temperature use discretion in taxiing away from the line. Sharp turns should be avoided. Sharp turns grind off rubber and apply serious stresses to nose and main gear. Use the engines for steering, and save the brakes. Taxi slowly; it is a simple matter to keep full control of the airplane with the engines.

Before take-off, run up engines, check magnetos, propeller control, and set superchargers. To avoid fouling plugs, idle engines at 800 to 1000 RPM. Close cowl flaps to one-third open. Extend wing flaps one-fourth for best normal average; one-half for shortest take-off. Head into wind, open throttles slowly and full out to stops. Hold brakes on until manifold pressure reaches 25" Hg. Use full power for take-off; it lessens the take-off run and corresponding wear and tear on landing gear, tires, and entire airplane. Have Co-Pilot hold throttle against stops and adjust super-chargers so as not to exceed manifold pressure operating limits. On take-off, maintain straight course with rudders. Do not use brakes.

As the plane picks up speed, lighten the nose and help it takeoff at a safe minimum speed; this is 110 MPH at 45,000 pounds to 130 MPH at full load. Do not hold the airplane on the ground when it is ready to fly. Any idea of picking up extra speed on the ground as a safety margin is quite the reverse. Help your airplane.

Raise landing gear when definitely clear and airborne, and reach 130 MPH airspeed as soon as possible to be in best condition in the event of engine failure. After take-off, maintain airspeed under 150 MPH until flaps are raised. The best average climb is 150 MPH. Consult performance chart for exact figure for specific load conditions. As long as the required minimum airspeed for stall is exceeded, the airplane is fully maneuverable with the flaps in any position. Stalling speed varies with loading, landing gear, cowl flaps, and flap setting. Maintain engine head temperature within limits by control of cowl flap opening. The cowl flaps cause buffeting between the one-third and two-thirds open position which should, therefore, be avoided.

If anything other than an airport flight is to be made, turn off auxiliary hydraulic master switch.

After reaching cruising altitude, level off, get "ON THE STEP" and pick up speed before power is reduced to cruising requirements. If power is reduced too soon and before the airplane has picked up full momentum for cruising it would mush along in a high attack, high drag attitude in trying to gain speed under reduced power and would probably be quite sluggish. Approach the cruising condition from the top, both speed and altitude, NEVER FROM BELOW.

The air handling of the airplane is conventional and normal. Stability is excellent and high maneuverability is possible. Primary instruction in flying has made the pilot aware of load factors. Keep this in mind when banking or maneuvering so as not to exceed the safe limits.

When you have squared away on a mission, check wheels, flaps, and cowl flaps. Check the fuel supply frequently lest an unexpected leak or excessive consumption place you in a difficult position.

Two inches of boost gain by use of turbos is recommended as the best operation. Too much boost will enrich the mixture with resulting loss of power and excessive fuel consumption.

Before entering the airport area, accomplish the following: Allow ample time to slow down to 150 MPH; turn on auxiliary hydraulic power; turn on booster pumps; lower landing gear and check the latches before making the final turn to enter the landing lane. Turbosuperchargers "OFF" as the waste gate closes with reduced exhaust pressure when engines are throttled back. On entering the final landing lane slow to 140 MPH; extend flaps one-half. Extended flaps not only increase lift and drag but change the glide angle and attitude of the airplane in a manner to greatly increase visibility. Speed to be maintained in a glide varies, depending upon load, flap setting, and use of power. Under 45,000 lbs. loading glide should be maintained at 120 MPH slowing to 110 MPH with full flaps on leveling off for landing.

The airplane is fully maneuverable with flaps extended. Maintain sufficient RPM to continue at a rate of descent of 400-600 feet per minute. At any time during the glide (but allowing ample time before crossing boundary of field to adjust to change of attitude before final stage of landing) extend the flaps fully. The exception to this is an emergency when it is necessary to use brakes immediately on touching the ground, which, too, is the only excuse for a three wheel landing. Hold the nose wheel off as long as possible and let the nose of the plane settle slowly and without shock, onto the nose gear. Do not "slap" the nose forward nor allow it to do so and do not apply the brakes with the nose wheel clear of the ground. In case of emergency or of faulty brakes, a nose high

landing with tail skid dragging will enable the pilot to land on any normal airport without using brakes.

Open cowl flaps immediately after landing and raise the wing flaps when convenient, but preferable before taxiing to avoid possibility of rocks or mud being thrown into the tracks.

Again taxi slowly and steer with the engines. Use brakes only when absolutely necessary. Enter parking area carefully. The wing span is 110 feet. There is no excuse for the carelessness of a collision on the ground or ground crash. Stop the engines with the mixture cut off. Leave cowl flaps open until engines cool. Set landing gear lever in the "DOWN" position. Leave cowl flaps open until engines cool. Set landing gear lever in the "DOWN" position after No. 3 Engine has stopped. Do not set parking brakes until brake drums have cooled.

On parking the airplane, align the nose wheel to coincide with the center line of the airplane.

FLYING CHARACTERISTICS

General — Steep banks up to 60° can be made easily and safely. However, it should be borne in mind that in a normal bank of 60° the load factor is "2" and in this position all loads are twice as severe as in level flight. Turns steeper than normal increase this load factor.

Rough air operation is not critical. However, it is good practice to slow down to 150 MPH (240 KmPH; 130 Knots) when in extremely turbulent air, and extend the landing gear if flying on instruments. Disengage the Automatic Pilot when flying in rough air.

Longitudinal Stability — The longitudinal stability of the airplane is positive over a wide range of center of gravity locations. Under normal loadings the airplane will return to normal flight when released from a stall or other abnormal positions. The maximum forward location of the C.G. should not exceed 23% of the mean aerodynamic chord while maximum aft location of the C.G. should not exceed 35% M.A.C. Care should be exercised to operate controls smoothly when flying close to these limits, especially with the C.G. in extreme aft positions, as it is easily possible to develop the limit load factors of the tail assembly with sudden heavy elevator operation.

In the higher speed range, the elevators become "heavy." This is desirable inasmuch as it helps to prevent sudden extreme application of the elevators, which might prove damaging to the structure. When maneuvering the airplane, as in a dive, always keep the

airplane trimmed by use of the trim tabs. If the pilot attempts to hold the full stick load, his sudden relaxing can apply a destructive force to the airplane.

Brakes and Taxiing — The brakes are operated by two sets of inter-connected pedals from either the pilot's or co-pilot's side. The hydraulic brakes operate on both an inboard and outboard drum on each main wheel. Failure of either the inboard or outboard system will leave 1/2 braking power. The operation of the hydraulic brakes is smooth and not "touchy." Increasing pedal pressure increases braking pressure proportionately.

The nose wheel is free to swivel 45° each way and is damped against shimmying. Any shimmy should not be tolerated for it can be cured by proper servicing of the dampers. Turning too sharply will damage the nose gear.

The airplane can and should be taxied by using outboard motors without the brakes.

Avoid overheating of brakes caused by applying them for long periods. Do not make small radius turns. Do not lock the inside wheel as it tears the rubber. Allow the inside wheel to roll. When necessary to use the brakes, they should be coordinated with applications of power.

The airplane has no inherent tendency to ground-loop and can be turned to either side while taxiing at a fast rate.

If the brakes have been used to any great extent prior to taxiing up to the line, allow the brakes to cool before applying the parking brake.

The main landing gear is located at approximately 40% of the M.A.C. C.G. locations forward of this point obviously will have no tendency to rock the airplane so as to lift the nose wheel off the ground, while movement of C.G. aft will prevent nose wheel contact.

Take-off — Take-off procedure is consistent with that of other large airplanes of the tricycle landing gear type and the ship will come off the ground easily at 110 MPH (175 KmPH; 95 Knots) for gross weights up to approximately 45,000 pounds (20,412 Kg.) to 130 MPH (210 KmPH; 115 Knots) for heavier loads.

After opening the throttle hold the brakes until the manifold pressure reaches 25" Hg. This permits the turbo regulator to stabilize and results in a smooth flow of power from all engines, and makes it much easier to maintain a straight course on take-off.

Climb — The most practical speed for the best average rate of climb is 150 MPH (240 KmPH; 130 Knots), 2550 RPM — 41" to 45 1/2" Hg.).

Stall — The stalling characteristics of the airplane depend, in addition to the inherent design, on wing flap setting, cowl flap position, landing gear position, the power setting, and whether de-icer system is operating.

The stalling point of the B-24D and B-24E airplanes is clean and forewarned by a tail shake and slight pitching. The complete stall is followed by the airplane falling off to either side without a tendency to spin. Due to the aerodynamic cleanliness of the design, the airplane will pick up speed rapidly. Correct the slight yawing produced by falling to one side or the other by application of rudder, the use of ailerons to lift a wing under this condition is forbidden until flying speed is recovered.

Extended wing flaps will reduce the stalling speed, as will also the use of power. Cowl flaps should be closed prior to stalling to avoid tail buffeting.

The loss of control in a stall is gradual, with all controls losing effectiveness at about the same time. With the de-icer boots operating, the stall is sharper.

With full flaps, use of a little power will reduce the stall speed appreciably.

Spins — The airplane has no inherent tendency to spin from a stall or slow, steeply banked turns and should not be forced to do so under any condition. The airplane was not designed for the loads imposed on the structure during a spin condition, and structural failure could result from spins.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

FLYING LIMITATIONS

Maneuvers Prohibited

Loop	Stall
Spin	Inverted Flight
Roll	Dive
Immelmann	Vertical Bank

Only conventional flying is permitted when airplane is loaded to maximum loaded weight for safe flight.

Airspeed Restrictions

1. **Do not** exceed the following indicated airspeeds:

Gross Weight	MPH	KmPH	Knots
41,000 lbs (18,597 Kg.)	355	570	105
41,174 lbs	325	520	280

56,000 lbs (25,401 Kg.)	275	440	240
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2. Do not lower landing gear hydraulically at a speed in excess of 155 MPH (250 KmPH; 135 Knots).
3. **Do not** lower wing flaps or fly airplane with wing flaps down at a speed in excess of 140 MPH (225 KmPH; 120 Knots).
4. **Do not** operate de-icer system at take-off or landing.

Instrument Dial Limitation Markings

Airspeed and engine instruments are marked to indicate their operating limits as follows:

Green indicates the operating range.

Red indicates the maximum and minimum safe reading.

Power Plant Restrictions

1. **Do not** exceed an engine speed of 2700 RPM.
2. **Do not** idle engines below 800 RPM for long periods.
3. **Do not** fail to operate oil dilution system for 3 or 4 minutes prior to shutting off engine, when frigid temperatures are anticipated.

Instrument Vacuum Selector Valve

In case of failure of either No. 1 or No. 2 Engine or of the air pumps on those engines, switch the vacuum selector valve on forward face of bulkhead at Station 4.1 so that the useful pump will operate the instrument suction rather than the de-icer suction.

Restrictions on Use of Automatic Pilot — or A.F.C.

Since experience with Automatic Pilots has demonstrated that abrupt control responses of the automatic mechanism under conditions of side slip or stall may result in a spin, the following must not be forgotten:

1. **Do not** operate airplane by the Automatic Pilot in extremely turbulent air under the following conditions:
 - a. When de-icer system is working; or

- b. When one or more engines are not delivering normal power output.
2. **Do not** place airplane under control of the Automatic Pilot regardless of speed or altitude, until the Pilot has determined by manual operation that the existing conditions permit safe control by the Automatic Pilot. In no case will Automatic Pilots be used when the airplane is flying at less than an indicated air speed of 155 MPH (250 KmPH; 135 Knots).
3. **Do not** operate airplane under control of the Automatic Pilot without one rated Pilot remaining "on watch" and maintaining a close check of the airplane and instruments.
4. **Do not** engage Automatic Pilot when follow-up indices are not lined up.
5. **Do not** make course and altitude changes with rapid knob movements. Turn slowly and smoothly.
6. **Do not** allow airplane to get too far out of trim.
7. **Do not** turn any of the three speed controls to "OFF" or "LOWEST SPEED" when Automatic Pilot is engaged as this would lock the corresponding surface controls in whatever position they happen to be.
8. **Do not** forget that an Automatic Pilot can be overpowered.
9. **Do not** forget that an Automatic Pilot can "spill" and "wander."

Bomb Clearance Instructions

When releasing bombs in a glide or climb, observe the restrictions shown in "Armament Manual."

Air loads build up rapidly on any large airplane in a dive, therefore, avoid abrupt movements of the controls.

Control trim should be maintained with the idea of keeping tail surface forces at a minimum. It is better to trim the airplane to slightly nose heavy rather than tail heavy. If it were trimmed tail heavy, in a dive the inherent tendency to pull up would make the application of up-elevator easier and more abrupt, creating higher load factor of "g's."

Landing — A three wheel landing is neither desired nor necessary. Land tail down with the main gear touching first and as speed diminishes allow the plane to settle gently on the nose gear. Landings from power glides with 400-500 ft./min. (122-152 meters/min.) rate of descent are easiest to accomplish because of the difficulty of making the proper landing flare with higher rates of descent, especially with a heavy load.

By using power in the glide with full flaps, indicated speeds as low as 105-115 MPH (170-185 KmPH; 90-100 Knots) can be held without danger, high loads requiring the higher speeds. These low speeds are not recommended but are mentioned to give the minimum limits of operation.

With no power, the desirable indicated gliding speed is 120 MPH (190 KmPH; 105 Knots). This speed also permits 10° banks near the ground and allows sufficient maneuverability with flaps extended for landing in bad visibility.

It is desirable to have the cowl flaps closed during extended reduced power glides in order to prevent rapid cooling of the engines. Always close flaps for landing.

When flying a heavy airplane remember that the inertia of a heavy body in motion resists effort to change the direction of that motion. Therefore, if a steep glide is being made with consequent high rate of descent, it takes some time and a considerable force to flare out this rate of descent and change the direction to one parallel to the ground. It cannot reasonably be expected with a rate of descent of over 500 ft./min. (152 meters/min.) to start to level off 5 to 10 feet (1.5 to 3 meters) above the ground and succeed in doing anything but "flying in."

While the tricycle landing gear does permit certain liberties of landing technique it does not permit ground contact while still in the glide as has been accomplished with lighter airplanes.

Normally the main landing gear wheels should touch the ground first, in the same manner as the tail wheel airplane. Brakes should not be applied until the nose wheel is on the ground and the weight of the plane is taken by the oleo strut. The airplane will tend to rock forward onto the nose as it loses speed and it should be prevented from doing so as long as possible with the elevators. If a sudden application of the brakes is made with the nose wheel off the ground, the tail will snap up and excessive load factors will be built up in the nose wheel gear and in the tail, due to the length of the airplane.

CAUTION: NEVER LAND WITH BRAKES LOCKED.

The emergency tail wheel or skid is not designed for landing loads and is only to protect the vertical fin and lower gun turret against accidental rocking back.

Airplanes equipped with a retractable tail skid may be landed with the tail low, as are airplanes without tricycle landing gear. The retractable mechanism, while not recommended for full tail landing loads, will stand the load imposed by rocking back after landing, and "dragging" the skid. In case of brake failure this feature may be used to advantage particularly if the crew is stationed well aft in the tail to keep the skid on the ground during the full run.

In case of emergency where the shortest possible landing run is imperative the use of brakes immediately on landing is necessary. In this case a three wheel landing is made and the thrust of the nose gear must be taken up by pushing the elevator controls forward before applying brakes. Do not lock wheels as tires will tear through the fabric in an astonishingly short time.

The airplane has no tendency to ground loop in a crosswind but any drift should be taken out before making ground contact.

Two Engine Failure — Even with two engines inoperative on one side, it is possible to fly the airplane in all normal maneuvers within the engine power limits. The use of full rudder tab greatly relieves the rudder pedal pressure required to maintain straight flight. When two engines on one side are delivering rated power it is more desirable to bank the airplane with the dead engines high.

WILL BE READ ALOUD BY EITHER CO-PILOT OR PILOT
(SEE AMPLIFIED CHECK LIST FOR DIVISION OF DUTIES, CO-PILOT AND PILOT)

A. A. F. OFFICIAL CHECK LIST

B-24, D, E, G, H, & J

15 January 194

BEFORE STARTING ENGINES

1. Form 1A
2. Loading
3. Wheel chocks
4. Pitot covers
5. Gas tank caps
6. Flight controls
7. Fuel tank valves & amount
8. Generator— Off
9. Carburetor air filter
10. Main line & battery selectors— On
11. Auxiliary pwr. unit & hyd. pump— On
12. Brake pressure & parking brake
13. Gyros— Uncaged
14. Auto pilot— Off
15. Supercharger— Off
16. Props— High RPM
17. AC Power switch— On
18. Intercoolers— Open
19. Pitot heater
20. Cowl flaps— Open
21. Mixtures— Idle cut-off
22. Wing flaps— Up
23. Wing, prop. & Carb. de-icers— Off
- *24. Emergency alarm bell checked
- *25. Nose Wheel lock clamp in place.

BEFORE TAXING

1. All instruments — Checked
2. Vacuum
3. Radio, altimeter & time
4. Wheel chocks

BEFORE TAKE-OFF

1. Trim tabs
2. Mixtures— Auto Rich
3. Exercise props, superchargers, & flaps
4. Props— High RPM
5. Run-up engines
6. Gyros— Set & uncage
7. Wing flaps— 20°
8. Flight controls
9. Doors and hatches
10. Aux. hyd. pump & power unit— Off
11. Generators— Off
12. Cowel flaps
13. Booster pumps— On
- *14. Nose wheel lock clamp removed

START ENGINES

1. Call clear, fire guard
2. Ignition switches— On
3. Booster pumps
4. Start engines
5. Flight indicator

* By Authority 16th BOTW

AFTER TAKE-OFF

1. Wheels
2. Superchargers
3. Throttles
- *4. Props— 2500 RPM
5. Wing flaps
6. Booster pumps— Off
7. Cowel flaps

A. A. F. OFFICIAL CHECK LIST
B-24 D, E, G, H, & J

BEFORE LANDING

1. Altimeter setting
2. Crew to stations (Nose clear)
3. Auxiliary hydraulic pump— On
4. Brake pressure
5. Auto pilot
6. Gear handle— Down
7. Mixtures
8. Props— 2400 RPM
9. Intercoolers
10. Cowl flaps
11. Booster pumps— On
12. Wing de-icers— Off
13. Wheels— Checked, light on, handle neutral
14. Ball turret and trailing antenna
15. Wing flap— 10°
- *16. Nose wheel lock clamp in place

FOLLOW-THROUGH LANDINGS

1. Wing flaps— 20°
2. Trim tabs— Set for take-off

END OF LANDING ROLL

1. Superchargers— Off
2. Booster pumps— Off
3. Generators— Off
4. Wing flaps— Up
5. Cowl flaps— Open
6. Aux. power unit— As required
7. Brake pressure

TO SECURE AIRPLANE

FINAL APPROACH

1. Props— High RPM
2. Superchargers
3. Wing Flaps 40°
4. Air speed— Call out

1. Switches— Off
2. Wheel chocks— In place
3. Gear handle— Down
4. Flight controls— Locked

2nd AIR FORCE MEMO 65-5 DATED 11/19/43
POWER SETTINGS FOR B-24 AIRPLANES

100 Octane		R.P.M.	M. P.	Mix	Estimated Gals./Hr	Cyl. Des.	Temp °C Max
Takeoff		2700	45	A. R.	640	220	240
Climb	Maximum 15 Minutes	2550	41	A. R.	550	220	240
	Maximum Desired	2400	37.5	A. R.	436	210	230
Cruise	Emergency Maximum	2450	35	A. R.	392	205	230
	Maximum Desired	2150	29.5	A. L.	188	200	220
Long Range Cruise		1750	29	A. L.	150	200	220



FOURS – FOURRS-B-24 –B 24'S

When the Army first called us to go off to The fighters won't hit you - you'll not get shot
The gunners are tired and the barrels are hot

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

The fighters they zoomed, the fighters they dived
We looked at the target, we knew we'd arrived
The bomb bays were opened, the bombs were away
And how we got back I don't know to this day

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

We turned on the power we turned on the switch
But something is missing its cold as a witch
The heaters they work by the book we are told
We don't doubt the book but we're so g--d--cold

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

Oh Mother dear Mother its sad to relate
Your poor boy has met a most horrible fate
We flew Through the flak oh so brave and so bold
We flew through the flak but he died of the cold.

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

war
They said not word one about the B-24's
So being young boys we rushed out to enlist
To get in the Air Corps we so did insist

Chorus-

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

For years we were training we knew not We what for We all ended up in a B-
24

They said it would fly and we said it would not
Till up in the air like a big bird we shot

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

In training we drank til we fell on the floor
Then found someone's bottle and called out for more
Then one day they told us our training was o'er
And we loaded ourselves on a B-24

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

On the way over we had drinks galore
At each place we stayed we got a 104
In Tunis we walked on the roof tops by night
And woke in the Casbah by dawn's early light

Chorus

Fours - Fours B-24's
We went off to war in a B-24

Now old Ed Keely gets up and tells us
There's no need to worry why make such a fuss
The fighters won't hit you - you'll not get shot
The gunners are tired and the barrels are hot

Chorus

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