

99TH BOMB GROUP



B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

1943 • • AFRICA/EUROPE • • 1945

395 COMBAT MISSIONS



THE 99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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May, 1994

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By the time this newsletter issue reaches you, some of us will have met in Daytona, FL for an informal, mini reunion. Previous such minis have been successful according to attendees. From what I have been told our committee has a great program arranged for the September reunion in Hampton, VA, so it should be a winner. Len Smith, Fran Grantz, and Bob Bacher have nailed down St. Louis for the 1995 jamboree. Being in the middle of the country should help in getting a good turnout.

The newsletter can use more membership input and stories. How about our unsung heroes, the ground crews, supply, and those members who did all the other jobs necessary to keep flight operations going. I suggest that a section of the newsletter be called OTBF (over the back fence). A concise report of several lines of current events in members lives (births, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.). Dialogue articles written by, or conversations with members or outside celebrities. Send a flood of mail to either Bernie Barr or Walter Butler.

After the Ontario reunion the Schroeders, Christiansens and I attended an Elderhostel at Lake Arrowhead. We stayed at the former Hilton Hotel which was quite plush (rack rate was \$250.00 per night. A geologist taught one course, which included a field trip to an old gold mine. He was also quite knowledgeable about many other subjects as well. The second course was given by the hotel chef who supervised the kitchen. He demonstrated the different techniques used in beautifying some of his presentations. Of course the ladies sat on the edge of their chairs with pencils and paper and the questions flew fast and thick. The group consisted of about 35 folks and an enjoyable time was had by all. I would strongly recommend to the our members who have the time to try Elderhostels. Anita and I have attended 8 or 9 in the past and have had a great time at each. If interested write for a descriptive brochure to "Elderhostel, 75 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110".

I wish you all good health.

Jules Horowitz

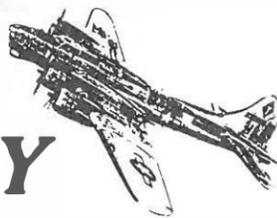




PASSED BY U.S. ARMY CENSORS

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HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that thy way be known upon earth, thy saving power among all nations.
 Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee !
 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou dost judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth.
 Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee !
 The earth has yielded its increase; God our God has blessed us.
 God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear him !

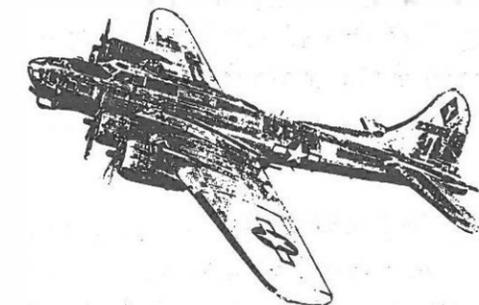
*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace,
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
 Where there is injury, pardon,
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is despair, hope;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 Where there is sadness, joy.
 O Divine Master, grant that I may
 not so much seek---
 To be consoled as to console,
 To be understood as to understand,
 To be loved as to love;---
 For it is in giving that we receive;
 It is in pardoning that we are
 pardoned;
 It is in dying that we are born ---
 to eternal life.*



Good sermon, but it wasn't a "high-fiver".



God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I'm so far behind, I will never die.



TAPS • TAPS • TAPS • TAPS • TAPS

STEPHEN MOLNAR

LESTER O. HAMANN

BERNIE RAFTERY

KEN KELLSTROM

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A. C. Henke
5103 Mansfield Lane
Shawnee, KS 66203



January 11, 1994

Dear Walter,

I am sure that you have received the information regarding the death of Gene Canciglia. If not, and if possible, please print the enclosed information in the next newsletter. Gene was a great person. I have always considered him as one of my very best friends. He will certainly be missed. During the war and the 49 years following, we have been in contact. Gene and his wonderful wife, Marjorie, have visited at our home several times. It was a joy to have them.

Approximately November 10, 1943 Major Daniel V. MacDonald, C.O. of the 416th Sq., had returned from the hospital in Bizerte and was forced to form a new crew. During his absence his original crew had been shot down. I felt very fortunate to have been selected as the tail gunner on his new crew. Gene was our top turret gunner... Our crew respected Gene as he was the oldest and most experienced gunner on the crew. He enlisted in the Air Corps in 1937. I was fresh out of gunnery school, had never been in a B-17 when I flew my first mission on Sept. 16, 1943. The target was Benevento, Italy and of all positions we were 'Tail-End-Charlie' of the entire 99th BG. Being in the tail position made me the last man over the target. Thank God we had no fighters that day, or myself and nine other crewmen might not have survived that trip! ... I thought it was rather amusing at the first 99th BG reunion which my wife, Mary, and I attended with Dan and Jean Ives at Houston that General Fay R. Upthegrove was reading the diary of my first mission. He remarked, "That was my fiftieth and last mission on a B-17". (Gen. Upthegrove later came back with a B-24 Group). This was the first mission for Dan and I both and we were on the same plane. The General had no idea what highly trained people he had with him on his last mission. Dan and I were together from enlistment, basic training, shipped overseas together, flew our fifty missions and returned home at the same time, and later met again at Miami Beach for R. & R. We got out of gunnery school, received our stripes and wings and were shipped to the coast headed for Casablanca, then to Oudna at Tunis, 1,200 miles by 40 & 8 box car, a seven day trip we will never forget! Obviously we learned to survive on a B-17 the hard way.

Gene Canciglia was what I would describe as the 'Super-take-charge-man'. I could write a book on events performed by this guy and some of the experiences that he told me over these many years. ... One event I witnessed was the day General Joseph H. Atkinson flew as our copilot (Nov. 24, 1943 to Toulon, France). Gene was caught stealing the General's Robert Burns cigars, not once but twice. He ended up talking his way out of both attempts plus the General gave his four cigars as a gift. That's a long story! He had many other encounters with 'Gen. Joe', as he called him., during the 31 years he served in the Air Force. Gene and the General became close friends.

The one thing I remember most happened two days after they formed our crew. Gene remarked "Partner, you don't have enough ammunition"! He told me he had inspected the tail position of our B-17 the 'Robert E. Lee' and found it carried only 600 rounds in each ammo compartment. After the initial shock of his first remark, instead of getting upset, I decided maybe I had better listen to this guy. He said, "I have already talked to Pete Basque, our crew chief, and he said we could knock the ends out of the compartments and he would furnish the plywood, 2 x 4's and tools if we wanted to extend the boxes to hold an additional 600 rounds. So instead of having only 1200 rounds we enlarged it to accommodate 1800 plus an extra case of 250 by the tail wheel. I flew 17 missions of my 50 on the 'Robert E. Lee' and found the extra ammo came in handy more than once. First Gene asked me how much i weighed. I told him 134 lbs. He said, "That's good, Maj. Mac will probably not notice the additional weight when he trims the plane".

Walt, in closing I would like to add that Gene was a role model husband. He was father of three sons and grandfather of three grandchildren. He was a true and respected friend to his Air Force buddies. He may be gone but will be fondly remembered by all of us.



Sincerely,

Al & Mary

Al & Mary Henke



Pup tent Poets

Alibi

And if I kissed another Dear,
See not that I was kissing you?
Within my arms she disappeared
And to my true love I was true.

For love like rain falls everywhere,
It mattered not it wasn't you;
I kissed a girl, a pretty face,
Believe me, I was kissing you.

—1st Lt. Robert Modica

War

I look back o'er the sombre shade
That war has left and Hate has
made,
And I regret that passing years
Can clear the eyes of bitter tears.

The stupid things men do
Recede in History's pastel hue—
A paragraph, a page or so,
Dismiss the noise, the pain and
woe.

Today the earth knows well the
crash
Of guns, the clank of tanks, the
smash
Of bombs—the pall of death; the
land
Is clawed by Mars' red, fiendish
hand.

Tomorrow, Lord, for us who pray
For frightened, hungry children—
may
We not forget that sombre shade
Too soon. Keep us a bit afraid.

For greater glory melts like snow
In spring. Too soon the heroes go.
New youth forgets the why and
how
Of things we hope and fight for
now.

And we who hope for love and
right

Have looked askance—the way we
fight
Our wars and win, yet lose our
soul.
This time give us a decent role.

To You who hold the key of fate:
Search out the heritage that's
great—
Mankind wants peace; not ill-made
truces,
Not tyranny; not powers' abuses.
—Lt. Col. Louis R. Wirak

Condign, Indeed

Before we string up Hitler
On a sour apple tree,
We should make him eat a ton
Of good old ration "C."
—Sgt. Louis Segal

Lucky Man

99TH BOMB GROUP



Bernie Barr flew a nearly unheard of 100 missions as a World War II bomber pilot.

GREG SORBER / JOURNAL

WW II Pilot Beat Odds of Survival

By John Fleck, Journal Staff Writer

If it can be said that history is written by those who survive it, then Bernie Barr is qualified. At his Northeast Heights home, the retired Air Force colonel---former Kirtland Air Force Base commander and veteran of a nearly unheard of 100 missions as a World War II bomber pilot---still has his notes on a 3 by 5 pad, from a June 2, 1944 briefing.

The operation was called "Frantic Joe", an unprecedented international mission in which a swarm of allied bombers converged into a massive attack force on a target in Hungary, then flew on to land in the Soviet Union.

They then flew a return mission, bombing a Nazi target on their way back to their home bases. It was the first time foreign forces had been permitted to operate from Soviet soil.

His notes recall the radio frequencies, the target's name, compass headings, bomb fuse settings, the code words, the aircraft positions. Looking back, Barr also remembers the spectacle of that massive flight of aircraft -- and the nagging fear.

"There was a certain feeling of safety in being part of such a great number of airplanes joining together", Barr wrote recently in The 99th Bomb Group Historical Society Newsletter. "But at the same time there was the apprehension of getting into an airplane that was easily to become the target of someone shooting live ammunition at you".

One-hundred times Barr felt that apprehension ---- a 50 mission tour of duty in the Pacific Theater, followed by a stint in the United States and then a second 50 mission tour in Europe.

Through 100 missions, Barr must acknowledge, the laws of probability ran against him surviving the war.

"The usual score was something like 10 or 15", said an admiring Walter Beckham, an Albuquerque friend of Barr who is himself a retired WW II fighter pilot.

As they near the 50th anniversary of those missions, Barr and his fellow aging 99th Bomb Group veterans, the survivors, are recording the old history with an energy borne both out of the excitement of the time and the need to remember and record the memories before they are lost.

In issue after issue, The 99th Bomb Group Historical Society Newsletter that Barr co-edits sifts through the documents and records the fliers' memories ---- the dramatic and the mundane, life and death:

"416 Bombardment Squadron, Sept. 6, 1944: Pomigliano D'Arco Airdrome at Naples was today's target and we did a good job of bombing and all planes returned safely. This dust is getting monotonous and we are all praying for a good rainstorm." (Cont. on next page.) (Cont. from previous page.)

"Jan. 28, 1944: 135th Squadron raid, and target was Aviana A/D, Italy. 7 of our planes participated in the raid, 6-8 enemy fighters were encountered just off the target and four of our aircraft were damaged. S/Sgt. J.A. Ganisio was killed when hit by a 20mm shell, and S/Sgt. Jack C Shipley was wounded by the same shell. The Squadron destroyed four of the attacking aircraft."

It is not the history of broad battles and decision points of history, but a record of a few of the small individual pieces that make up that big picture.

"We do this," Barr said, "to try to reconstruct history."

The battles of WW II were the start of an illustrious military career for Barr. By 1946, the wartime major had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, and he served as vice commander of Clovis Air Base (now Cannon Air Force Base, near Clovis in Eastern New Mexico).

He taught young officer trainees at Florida State University and served as director of training equipment procurement for the Air Force at the Pentagon. In September 1961, he came to Albuquerque as commander of Kirtland Air Force Base, where he served until 1966.

After his 1970 retirement, he and his wife Doris returned to Albuquerque where Barr now lives, painting and helping collect his histories.

Why, Barr is asked, after that broad career, is it those missions over Europe and the Pacific that he remembers the most?

He talks about the relationships forged, and the way the prerogatives of rank have fallen away among the old veterans.

He mentions how many people came to their last reunion, and the chance he had to fly the computer simulator for the Air Force's B-1 bomber ---- his old B-17's great grandchild.

The question is repeated. Why?....He thinks for a moment.

"When you can see the flak, big black balls of smoke exploding in front of you and you can feel your airplane shake," he says, those are things you remember.

SQUADRON WAR DIARY

UNIT HISTORY OF THE 416TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON, 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP(H)
MONTH OF JANUARY, 1944

A. ADMINISTRATION.

No changes in organization or station.

Strength:	January 1, 1944	Officers	79	Enlisted MEN	372	Total	451
	January 31, 1944	Officers	79	Enlisted men	372	Total	451

No increase or decrease for the month.

On January 24, 1944, Captain Burnham E. Shaw, succeeded Major Daniel V. Macdonald as the Squadron Commander. Captain George E. Andrews succeeded Captain Shaw as Operations Officer on Jan 24, 1944. On Jan 24, 1944, 1st Lt. Orville Eiden succeeded Capt. George E. Andrews as flight Leader of Flight A. Lt. Kirtland A. Wilson succeeded Lt. Eiden as Flight Leader of Flight B. Lt. J.P. Leech succeeded Lt. Wilson as flight Leader of Flight C. Lt. Willard Kistzer completed his tour of combat duty and relinquished his post as Flight Leader of Flight D, but no one was appointed to take his place.

1st Lt. Edward T. Allard Jr., succeeded 1st Lt D.T. Hemmingsen as Squadron Bombardier on Jan 6, 1944.

B. BATTLES.

This month the Squadron was operational 24 days. This is the highest number of operational days for the Squadron since it has been engaged in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations. Targets for the month included Airdromes, Marshaling Yards and Harbor Installations, and Industrial Installations.

Jan 3, 1944, was the 115th Squadron raid and the target was the Ball bearing works at Villar Perosa, Italy. 7 of our planes made the raid. Six enemy fighters were encountered and heavy flak was encountered over the target. The raid was very successful and the pictures of the bombing show the target demolished.

Jan 4, 1944. 116th Squadron raid and target was city of Sofia, Bulgaria. Eight of our planes participated in the raid, but no bombs were dropped because of clouds that obscured the target. 3 of our planes landed at Bari, Italy to refuel on the way home.

Jan 6, 1944. 116th Squadron raid and target was Reggio Emilia, Italy. 9 of our planes participated in the raid and the results were very good. No flak or fighters were encountered.

Jan 7, 1944. 117th Squadron raid to Weiner-Neustad, Austria. 6 planes participated in the raid, but no bombs were dropped because of weather conditions.

January 9, 1944, 119th Squadron mission. Target was Pola Harbor, Italy. Was a very successful raid and 7 of our aircraft participated. Raid was uneventful and no flak or fighters were encountered.

January 10, 1944. 120th raid and target was Sofia, Bulgaria. 8 of our planes participated in the raid. The formation encountered 35 enemy aircraft over the target and the flak was very heavy and accurate. Lt. C.E. Miller, S/Sgt P.J. Wojack, S/Sgt X.R. Rynier and S/Sgt E.P. Goldstein destroyed enemy fighters during the aerial battle, as did T/Sgt H.P. Carter, who received credit for his 3rd enemy fighter. 7 of our aircraft were damaged by flak or the enemy fighters, but all planes and personnel returned safely from the raid.

January 11, 1944. 121st Squadron raid, and the target was Piraeus Harbor, Greece. 7 of our aircraft participated in the raid. Over the target 20 to 30 enemy fighters were encountered. S/Sgt C.L. McGorry and S/Sgt E. Moclovic each destroyed one enemy ME 109.

January 13, 1944. 122nd Squadron raid, and target was Guidonia A/D, in Italy. Six of our planes participated in the raid and results were very good. Heavy flak and 15 to 20 enemy aircraft were encountered over the target. S/Sgt J.J. Simoncelli and T/Sgt D.O. Modestitt were each credited with destroying an enemy fighter in the aerial encounter.

January 14, 1944. 123rd raid for the Squadron, and the target was Mostar A/D, in Yugoslavia. 8 of our planes participated in a very successful raid. No enemy fighters were encountered but intense heavy flak was experienced over the target.

January 15, 1944. 124th Squadron raid, and target was Arezzo, Italy, marshaling yards. 7 of our planes participated and was a successful mission. No enemy fighters or flak encountered.

January 16, 1944. 125th Squadron raid to Villaorba, Italy. 9 of our aircraft participated in the raid. Results of the bombing were very good. 3 to 5 E/Ac were encountered over the target. All our planes returned safely.

January 17, 1944. 126th Squadron raid, and target was Prato, Italy, marshaling yards. 8 planes participated in a very successful raid. No fighters or flak were encountered.

January 18, 1944. 127th Squadron raid and target was Poggibonsi, Italy marshaling yards. Raid was very successful and no E/Ac or flak was encountered.

January 19, 1944. 128th raid, and target was Centocella A/D near Rome, Italy. 8 of our planes participated and all returned safely. No fighters, no flak.

January 20, 1944. 129th raid, and target was Rome Ciampino A/D. Good raid and no fighters nor flak encountered. 8 of our aircraft participated.

January 21, 1944. 130th raid, and target was Rimini, Italy, marshaling yards. 8 of our planes participated and bombing was very good. No fighters or flak encountered.

January 22, 1944. 131st raid and target was Pontedera, Italy, marshaling yards. 9 of our planes participated in the raid. No fighters or flak encountered.

January 23, 1944. 132nd Squadron raid, and target was Poggibonsi, Italy. 8 of our planes participated. Results could not be observed due to weather. No flak or fighters encountered.

January 24, 1944. 133rd Squadron raid, and target was Sofia, Bulgaria. No bombs dropped. Target obscured by clouds. Lt. M.E. Kietzer was the squadron leader for the raid. Three a/c landed at Bari, Italy to refuel. #409 had to ditch all equipment over the Adriatic sea, as it was low on gas and just barely made the field at Bari.

January 27, 1944. 134th Squadron raid and target was Salon De Provence A/D, France. 8 of our aircraft completed the raid. Target was well covered and results were very good. 10 enemy fighters engaged the formation. S/Sgt V.L. Poling destroyed two of the attacking fighters, and S/Sgt F.L. Laxson destroyed one enemy fighter. Six of our A/C were damaged by fighters and heavy, intense flak. 5 planes landed at Naples to refuel and returned to base in the evening. #509 was left at Naples to have battle damage repaired.

January 28, 1944. 135th Squadron raid, and target was Aviana A/D, Italy. 7 of our planes participated in the raid. 6-8 enemy fighters were encountered just off the target and four of our aircraft were damaged. S/Sgt J.A. Ganisio was killed when hit by a 20mm shell, and S/Sgt Jack C. Shipley was wounded by the same shell. The squadron destroyed four of the attacking aircraft. Claimants were: S/Sgt J.W. Wingfield, S/Sgt. W.N. Sigmon, S/Sgt J.D. Kirpatrick, and S/Sgt R.V. Wheatly.

January 29, 1944. 136th Squadron Raid, target for 9 of our planes was the Certaldo Marshaling Yards in Italy. No bombs dropped because of clouds covering the target.

January 30, 1944. 137th Squadron raid and target was Maniago, A/D in Italy. Capt. Andrews led the Squadron and the Group on today's raid. 9 of our planes participated in the raid and the results were very good. 10 enemy fighters were encountered. S/Sgt J.J. Simoncelli, S/Sgt D. Phillips, and S/Sgt S.D. Lyle destroyed enemy fighters.

January 31, 1944. 138th Squadron raid, and target was the Airdrome at Udine, Italy. 9 of our planes participated in the raid, and the squadron was led by our C.O. Captain B.E. Shaw. Results of bombing were very good. 10-15 enemy fighters were encountered. Sgt J.F. Bear, T/Sgt R.F. Graffius and S/Sgt J.A. Snell, and S/Sgt F.L. Laxson destroyed enemy fighters. 2nd Lt. J.E. Russel was injured when hit in the knee by a piece of flak. Four of our aircraft were damaged by the very accurate flak and by the fighters.

C. CASUALTIES.

No men are missing in action.

S/Sgt J.A. Genisio was killed in action on his 50th combat mission. ASN 37218987. Waist Gunner on Lt. W.E. Kietzers crew. Sgt Genisio was killed January 28, 1944, on a raid over Aviano, Italy.

Lt J.E. Russel, O-749453, was injured by flak, on Jan 31, 1944, while on a raid over Udine-Campofrodina A/D, Italy.



S/Sgt Jack C. Shipley, 19099068, was injured slightly by flak while on a raid over Aviano, Italy, Jan 28, 1944.

D. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS.

Major Daniel V. Macdonald received the Distinguished Flying Cross Jan 6, 1944. The D.F.C. was received for participation in a secret mission the night preceding the invasion of Sicily by the Allied Forces.

UNIT HISTORY OF THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) 347TH BOMB SQ.
MONTH OF JANUARY, 1944



10 January 1944 - Today was the fourth consecutive operational day for our squadron. Eleven of our A/C took off at 0950 hours to their target at Sofia, Bulgaria. Bombs were dropped and all of our A/C returned safely at 1520 hours except one. That was A/C #170. The following combat claims have been approved:

S/Sgt John O. Crenshaw (14156199)	1 ME-109 destroyed
S/Sgt Melvin (NMI) Klemetson (39178959)	1 ME-109 destroyed
S/Sgt Frederick E. Terhune (32464808)	1 Ma-200 destroyed
Sgt Ira C. Griswold (39848826)	1 ME-109 destroyed
Sgt Hayward B. Steele (33283380)	1 Ma-200 destroyed
Sgt Abe (NMI) Radel (33054884)	1 FW-190 damaged

13 January 1944 - Ten of our B-17s took off at 0914 hours to their target, the Guidonis A/D, Italy. There were no early returns and all of our A/C dropped their 500lb bombs over the target. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1344 hours. Flak was reported as being heavy, moderate, and accurate. 15 to 25 E/A were seen and eight were encountered.

14 January 1944 - Today was operational for our squadron. Seven of our B-17s took off at 0914 hours to their target, the Mostar A/D, Yugoslavia. One of our ships that was scheduled to have taken off didn't due to mechanical trouble. Flak was reported as being heavy, moderate and accurate. No enemy A/C were observed. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1314 hours.

15 January 1944 - Ten of our A/C took off at 0958 hours to their target, the M/Y at Arezzo, Italy. There were two early returns due to mechanical trouble. 15 to 20 E/A were observed but there were only six encounters. Flak was reported as being heavy, light, and inaccurate. There were no casualties and all of our planes returned safely at 1502 hours.

16 January 1944 - Ten of our A/C took off at 1000 hours to their target, Villaorba L/G, Italy. There were three early returns due to mechanical trouble. Flak was not present over the target. 3 ME-109s were seen attacking a small formation of B-24s that were heading toward our formation for protection. Our own gunners fired at the formation of B-24s before they recognized them. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1525 hours.

17 January 1944 - Eight of our B-17s took off at 0924 hours to their target, the RR Jct and M/Y at Prato, Italy. One of our A/C returned early due to mechanical trouble. There was no flak and no E/A. No casualties and all of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1500 hours.

18 January 1944 - Nine of our B-17s took off at 1035 hours to their target, the M/Y at Paggibonsi, Italy. There were no early returns. There was no flak and no E/A seen. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1615 hours.

19 January 1944 - Eleven of our B-17s took off at 1023 hours to their target, the Centocelle A/D Rome, Italy. There were no early returns. No E/A were seen and there was no flak. No casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1423 hours.

20 January 1944 - Ten of our B-17s took off at 1020 hours to their target, the Ciampino A/D at Rome, Italy. There were no E/A seen and there was no flak. Results of the bombing are believed to have been good. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1431 hours.

21 January 1944 - Ten of our A/C took off at 1020 hours to their target at Pontassieve, Italy. Due to weather, the alternate target at Rimini was bombed. The objective there was the M/Y and RR bridge. One of our A/C returned early due to mechanical trouble. There was no flak. From 4 to 8 E/A were seen but there were no encounters. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1440 hours.

22 January 1944 - Eleven of our B-17s took off at 1019 hours to their target at Perugia, Italy, but due to weather, they bombed their alternate target at Castiglione. One of our A/C returned early due to mechanical trouble. There was no flak, and no E/A and no casualties. All of our A/C returned safely at 1535 hours.

23 January 1944 - Nine of our A/C took off at 0935 hours to their target, the M/Y at Poggibonsi, Italy. The 10th ship scheduled to take off did not because of mechanical trouble. There was no flak and no E/A. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely at 1425 hours.

24 January 1944 - Eleven of our A/C took off at 0930 hours to their target at Sofia, Bulgaria. There were two early returns due to mechanical trouble. There was no flak and no E/A. The flyer's potential enemy was up to meet them today however. Bad weather prevented them from bombing their objective and a navigational error caused them to fly 90 miles beyond their target. Seven of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1640 hours, one A/c, #746, returned 25 January 1944, and A/C #340 is still missing with no word from them.

27 January 1944 - Ten of our B-17s took off at 0825 hours to their target, the A/D at Salon de Provence, France. Flak was reported as being heavy, intense, and accurate with both barrage and tracking types present. From 15 to 25 E/A were encountered and we had claims for four of them being destroyed by our gunners. The following claims were approved from today's mission:

1st Lt Walton R. Bush (0-670068)	1 FW-190 destroyed
S/Sgt Richard L. August (33151723)	1 FW-190 prob. destroyed
S/Sgt George (NMI) Thurston (36384298)	1 FW-190 destroyed

28 January 1944 - Nine of our A/C took off at 0826 hours to their target, the A/D at Aviano, Italy. Flak was reported as being heavy, moderate, and very accurate. From 15 to 20 E/A were encountered and we had claims for six of them being destroyed by our gunners. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1545 hours. The following combat claims have been approved:

S/Sgt Kenneth L. Bradt (39246365)	1 FW-190 destroyed
S/Sgt Harold R. Griese (16133930)	1 ME-109 destroyed
S/Sgt Jesse H. Hobbs (13119028)	1 ME-109 destroyed
S/Sgt Raymond H. King (13134668)	1 FW-190 destroyed
S/Sgt Frank J. Kaicinski (16154842)	1 FW-190 destroyed
S/Sgt Arthur K. Lincoln (12012072)	1 ME-109 destroyed

29 January 1944 - Nine of our A/C took off at 0840 hours to their target at Poggibonai, Italy. Due to overcast over the target, they bombed targets of free choice. The M/Ys at Fabriano, S. Vicino, and S. Giorgio, Italy. Flak was reported as being heavy, slight, and inaccurate because it was apparently aimed at the 97th Bomb Gp. No E/A were observed. All of our A/C returned safely at 1300 hours.

30 January 1944 - Nine of our B-17s took off at 0858 hours to their target, the A/C at Maniago, Italy. There were two early returns due to mechanical trouble. Seven of our A/C dropped their bombs over the target. 5 to 10 ME-109s were observed in the target area, and six were encountered. There was no flak and no casualties. All of our A/C returned safely at 1410 hours. The following combat claims were approved from this mission.

Sgt Hayward JS. Steele (33283380)

1 FW-190 destroyed
1 ME-109 damaged

31 January 1944 - Eight of our B-17s took off at 0945 hours to their target, the Campofmido A/D at Udine, Italy. There were no early returns. 3 to 5 E/A were observed, and 3 were encountered. Flak was reported as heavy, moderate, and accurate. Tracking type. There were no casualties and all of our A/C returned safely to their base at 1440 hours.

C. CASUALTIES

10 January 1944 - The following named enlisted men and officers are listed as missing in action from the mission to Sofia, Bulgaria on this date:

2nd Lt Dale E. Shupe
2nd Lt James R. Whitley
2nd Lt James W. Knox
2nd Lt John R. Lees
T/Sgt Edward E. Prosch
T/Sgt Bernard D. Sheplin

S/Sgt John C. Agliata
S/Sgt Leonard H. Lariviere
S/Sgt Jack V. Pipkin
S/Sgt B.M. Davis

24 January 1944 - The following named enlisted men and officers are listed as missing in action from the mission to Sofia, Bulgaria on this date:

2nd Lt John P. Devlin
2nd Lt Allan H. Hoover
2nd Lt Michael E. McDonnell
2nd Lt John W. Pace Jr.
S/Sgt Richard B. Hobby

Sgt Gus T. Grown Jr.
Sgt Billy B. Burnett
Sgt John T. Eldridge
Sgt Robert D. Molina
PFC Bernard J. Larvin

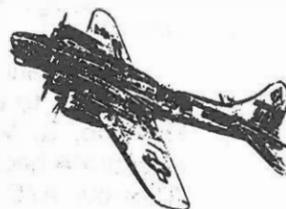
27 January 1944 - The following named enlisted men and officers are listed as mission in action from the mission to Salon de Provence, France on this date:

1st Lt Wesley G. Coss
2nd Lt Robert W. Johnson
2nd Lt Walter M. Arundson
2nd Lt Ernest R. Jenkins
Sgt Edward T. Madigan

S/Sgt Joseph M. Kinnane
S/Sgt Oscamis (NMI) Najarin
Sgt Harold B. Rice
Sgt James P. Hoskins
Sgt Clifford E. Henderson

D. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

8 January 1944 - M/Sgt William H. Bohon and T/Sgt Cecil W. Carson were presented the Legion of Merit Medal today by Brig General Whiting for the outstanding work they performed in the maintenance of our planes before the ground echelon arrived. Major Harry R. Burrell received the Oak Leaf Cluster for the Distinguished Flying Cross for the unique work he accomplished in the invasion of Sicily.



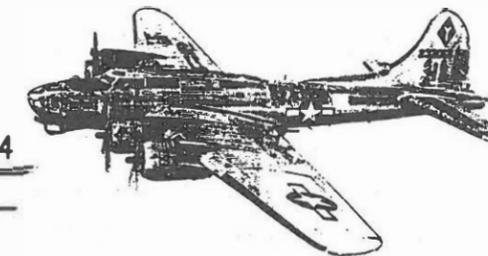
COMBAT DIARY

T/SOT. MIKE JOHNS

A.S.N. 6888497

MAY 7th. 1944 TO OCT. 7th. 1944

99th. Bomb Group 347th. Sqdn.



CREW MEMBERS:

PILOT D. WEINBERG
C. B. KATZENMEYER
CO-PILOT E. GRAY
NAVIGATOR J. KING
BOMBARDIER C. GARDNER



RADIO-GUNNER E. MORTON
WAIST GUNNER W. MURPHY
C. SHERMAN
WAIST GUNNER H. SCHUMACHER
BALL GUNNER C. HICKS
TAIL GUNNER N. MOSLEY

ENGINEER

TOP-GUNNER M. JOHNS

MISSION # 1 & 2 MAY 7th. 1944

7:15 Hrs. TARGET: MARSHALLING YARD BUCHAREST, ROUMANIA

As this being my first mission I flew top turret gunner with a seasoned crew. Pilot was Capt. Schroeder. When about 10 min. from target we got our first flak. The first burst was about 100 yards off right wing. The second burst was behind # 3 engine. This burst blew the plexiglas dome off of the top turret. What a way to start out fifty missions.

We had to fly through a wall of flak to hit the target. After leaving target area we were attacked by several enemy fighters. Our escort had left us due to shortage of fuel. We were on our own, saw two (2) B-17s. go down. Our group got eight (8) enemy fighters, several were seen trailing smoke

MISSION # 3 & 4 MAY 10th. 1944

7:00 Hrs. TARGET: AIRCRAFT FACTORY WIENER-NEUSTADT, AUSTRIA

This was the home base for GOERINO'S ACE FIGHTER PILOTS. FW-190s with yellow hubs on the props. Flak was very heavy over target area and accurate.

After we dropped our bombs we were attacked by several FW-190s we fired several hundred rounds at them, but the FW-190 had a lot of armour plating and you could see the tracers bounce off of them. We had ten (10) holes in our plane.

MISSION # 5 MAY 13th. 1944

6:00 Hrs. TARGET: RAIL YARD TRENTO, ITALY

Moderate flak, no enemy fighters were observed. Destroyed supply train.

MISSION # 6 MAY 14th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 925

6:25 Hrs. TARGET: AIR-DROME PLACENZA, ITALY

Had some flak before starting bomb run, very light. No enemy fighters seen.
BLEW OUT LEFT TIRE ON LANDING.

MISSION # 7 MAY 18th. 1944

Credit for (1) mission only

5:25 Hrs. TARGET: OIL REFINERY POLESTI, ROUMANIA

When we were about thirty minutes from target we were recalled due to bad weather over target area. Two (2) B-17s hit wing tips, one went out of control and crashed. We only saw three (3) chutes come out. Our waist gunner Sgt. Wm Murphy had a nervous breakdown. He was grounded and assigned to ground crew. Murphy was replaced by Sgt. Carl Sherman.

MISSION # 8 MAY 19th. 1944

5:15 Hrs. TARGET: OIL DEPOT PORTO MARGHERA, ITALY

Very little flak. Did not observe any enemy fighters. We got a direct hit on target. Had P-38 Escorts.

MISSION # 9 MAY 22nd. 1944

4:00 Hrs. TARGET: GERMAN SUPPLIES AND RESERVE TROOPS AVEZZANO, ITALY

Flak was from town near target area, heavy intense and accurate. Barrage and tracking type. All planes dropped 500lb. bombs. Had P-38 and P-51 escorts.

MISSION OPERATION TIME ONLY MAY 23rd. 1944

4:30 Hrs. TARGET: OIL STORAGE, FERENTINO, ITALY Turned back engine trouble.

MISSION OPERATION TIME ONLY MAY 25th. 1944 PLANE B-17 #092

2:40 Hrs. TARGET LYONS, FRANCE

Group did not reach target. The group got off course, ending up over enemy lines at altitude of 8 to 10 thousand feet. We were hit by intense and very accurate flak. The planes scattered to escape flak, then tried to regroup to return to base. All planes were severely damaged. One plane was reported as missing which was our plane B-17 #092 We had two (2) engines out and third (3rd.) went out as we approached a small air base near Naples, Italy.

We landed with one (1) engine. Bombardier, C. Gardner and Navigator, J. King were both wounded by flying plexiglas. We counted (53) flak holes in nose of plane

MISSION # 10 MAY 27th. 1944

8:00 Hrs, TARGET: RAIL YARD AVIGNON, FRANCE

No enemy resistance, no flak. Did observe 8 to 10 ME-109s and FW-190s that passed under our formation, appeared to be after the group behind us. Got good hits on target, Roundhouse, 3 large fires and explosions. Pilot Lt. D. Weinberg cracked-up, tried to bail out. When we landed he was grounded, sent to hospital for observation. Last report was he was flying recon for British Air Force. Engineer - M. Johns Radio - Operator E. Morton Tail-Gunner N. Mosley spent 1st. week of June at rest camp at Rome, Italy

MISSION OPERATION TIME ONLY JUNE 16th. 1944

2:40 Hrs. TARGET: KAGRAN VACUUM OIL CO. VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Recalled as we were flying alternate. Group would schedule (x) number of planes plus alternate. If a plane had to turn back due to engine or other trouble before going half way to target the alternate would take his place.

MISSION # 11 & 12 JUNE 23rd. 1944 PLANE B-17 #075

7:25 Hrs. TARGET: ROMANO AMERICANO OIL REFINERY POLESTI, ROUMANIA

This was our first mission with Pilot Capt. Charles B. Katzenmeyer replacing Pilot Lt. D. Weinberg. Just before reaching target area 30 to 40 enemy fighters were observed coming up from different directions. They made several frontal attacks passing through the formation trying to break up bomb run. Flak was heavy but we only got two hits on our plane.

MISSION # 13 JUNE 25th. 1944

8:00 Hrs. TARGET: OIL AND AMMO DUMP RAIL YARD SEPE, FRANCE

No enemy fighters were observed, and only had two burst of flak fired from a boat or barge.

MISSION # 14 & 15 JUNE 26th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 196

6:30 Hrs. TARGET: WINTERHAFEN OIL DEPOT VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Flak was intense, heavy and accurate. Most flak I had ever seen. One B-24 down from flak over target (9) chutes. Two B-17s down over target from flak. One (8) chutes, other none. Pilot said, they are throwing everything at us but the kitchen sink. Tail gunner remarked, I see a guy down there with a pipe wrench. Sgt. C. Sherman waist gunner got a fighter FW-190. No flak holes in our plane.

MISSION # 16 JUNE 27th. 1944

6:50 Hrs. TARGET: BROD M/Y BROD, YUGOSLAVIA

Very little flak over target area. Two enemy fighters ME-109s attacked last plane in formation. slight damage, were driven off by escort P-36

MISSION # 17 & 18 JULY 4th. 1944 PLANE B17 #925

7:00 Hrs. TARGET: OIL REFINERY BRASOV, ROUMANIA

No enemy fighters were observed, flak over target was heavy and accurate. One B-17 #651 hit, feathered #1 engine and peeled off (10) chutes came out and then plane crashed. We had no hits on our plane B-17 #925.

MISSION # 19 JULY 5th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 075

8:30 Hrs. TARGET: RAIL YARD MONTPELLIER, FRANCE

Heavy and accurate flak over target area, Observed a few enemy fighters ME-109s after leaving target area, they made no attempt to attack. several B-17s had flak damage, but our plane had none B-17 3075

MISSION # 20 & 21 JULY 7th. 1944

8:10 Hrs. TARGET: SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY

Flak was heavy, intense and accurate over target area. Enemy fighters were everywhere. JU-88s and ME-210s were firing rockets at us from 6 O'clock level. Other fighters observed in target area were, ME-109s, ME-210s, ME-410s, FW-190s and JU-88s. About (60) fighters total. App. 20 ME-210s were attacking us from 12 O'clock high. All top turret gunners were firing at them. I picked up one in my sights and started tracking. He was not firing so I assumed his guns were jammed or the pilot was wounded. I was sure he was going to crash us. When he was about 1000 yards out I opened up both 50 cal. guns in top turret and emptied both belts app. 1800 rounds, I could see the tracers going into the plane. When he was about 200 yds. out the fighter exploded. I put in for credit for the kill, but since other gunners were firing at same fighter credit was denied.

When bombardier released the bombs half of them did not drop. I had to go into the bombay on an 8" wide cat walk and trip the hangers with a screwdriver. Temp. out side was about 40 below zero. Had lots of flak holes in our plane.

MISSION # 22 & 23 JULY 9th. 1944

7:40 Hrs. TARGET: FOLESTI-AMELIA OIL REFINERY FOLESTI, ROUMANIA

Only saw a few enemy fighters going to and from target. Heavy flak over target area. Another crew flew plane B-17 #925 on this mission. When #3 engine caught on fire seven (7) men bailed out. Rest of crew extinguished fire and flew plane back to base.

MISSION # 24 JULY 14th. 1944 PLANE B-17 #196

6:00 Hrs. TARGET: HUNGARIAN OIL CO. & REFINERY BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Four (4) enemy fighters were observed some distance away but they made no attempt to attack. Heavy and accurate flak over target area. Good hits on target and left it burning. Escorts were P-38s P-47s P-51s Had two (2) large holes in plane

MISSION # 25 & 26 JULY 16th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 196

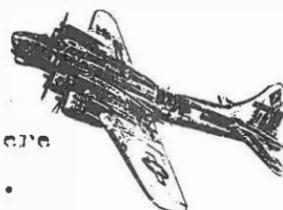
6:25 Hrs. TARGET: OIL STORAGE & INDUSTRIAL AREA VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Eight or ten enemy aircrafts ME-109s & FW-190s made single passes at our formation. Escorts drove them away and provided good coverage over target area. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Got five (5) large flak holes in our plane.

MISSION # 27 & 28 JULY 20th. 1944

6:25 Hrs. TARGET: GERMAN AIR-BASE MEMMINGEN, GERMANY.

Approximately 75 to 80 enemy aircrafts were spotted on ground. Several came up to attack us but our escort of P-51s arrived and kept them away from us. Only saw one burst of flak over target area. It was not accurate.



MISSION # 29 & 30 JULY 25th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 196

6:50 Hrs. TARGET: HERMAN GOERING TANK WORKS LINZ, AUSTRIA

At target area flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Had some very good hits on target. This was about the largest air battle our group encountered. The sky was full with burning and exploding bombers and fighters, also lots of parachuting airmen. We flew this mission in Plane B-17 #196

450 B-17s and B-24s were on this mission, escorted by 200 P-38 & P-51 fighters. We were engaged in battle with more than a hundred enemy fighters ME-109s and FW-190s. Several bombers exploded over target area. One B-17 lost a wing, one had (3) engines out and was going down (0) chutes. One P-51 had the tail section shot off. The pilot bailed out. This mission was listed as THE AIR BATTLE OF THE BALKANS.

MISSION # 31 JULY 30th. 1944

5:30 Hrs. TARGET: RAIL-YARD BROD, YUGOSLAVIA ALTERNATE TARGET

First target was rail yard at Budapest, Hungary but it was covered by clouds so we flew alternate target. No enemy fighters were seen on this mission. Flak in target area was heavy and accurate. No damage to our plane.

AUGUST 2nd to 9th. 1944 T/Sgt. Johns T/Sgt. Morton S/Sgt. Mosley spent week on Isle of Capri. R.&R.

MISSION # 32 AUG. 12th. 1944

6:25 Hrs. TARGET: GUN POSITIONS SAVONA ARNA, ITALY

No oppositions, some flak. One (1) B-17 blew up in mid air (Reason Unknown)

MISSION # 33 AUG. 15th. 1944

7:00 Hrs. TARGET: BEACH-HEAD # 261 (INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE)

Knocked out enemy gun emplacements on beach to clear way for troop landing. We left home base at 3:29 A.M. returned at 10:05 A.M. Saw Navy fighters take off from flat top off the coast of Corsica. Also saw Battle Ships firing big guns to cover landing barges. Dropped our bombs at 7:25 A.M. Troops landed at 7:35 A.M.

MISSION # 34 AUG. 17th. 1944

5:00 Hrs. TARGET: A/D DISPERSAL AREA NIS, YUGOSLAVIA

No enemy fighters were seen. Some flak for 347th. Sqdn. Followed by 348th. Sqdn. they had heavy flak and one (1) B-17 went down over target area. counted (10) chutes then plane crashed and exploded.

MISSION # 35 & 36 AUG. 20th. 1944

8:20 Hrs. TARGET: SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT OSWIECIN, POLAND

Heavy, intense and accurate flak over target area. Several planes had flak damage. No enemy fighters attacked our group, but group ahead of us were attacked by ME-109s & ME-110s Escorts P-51s also engaged enemy fighters.

MISSION # 37 & 38 AUG. 22nd. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 744

8:15 Hrs. TARGET: OREDIAL SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY

This mission was a 1136 mile trip. We flew lead ship in the group. Pilot Major Katzenmeyer, Co-Pilot Capt. Shull. About (15) minutes from target we were approached by several enemy fighters ME-109s they were engaged by our escorts P-51s and driven away. These P-51s fighters had black/white checker board tails. Most of the Pilots were Black and were known as THE TUSKAGEE AIHMEN. They were taking their training in Alabama, when I was crew chief on the line there.

Enough cannot be said about them, they sure deserve a lot of credit. They were dedicated pilots. They would stay with the bombers until the enemy left. They would not hesitate to fly cover to any damaged bomber.

Had a lot of flak in target area. Three (3) men were wounded from flak. Our tail gunner S/Sgt. N.A. Mosley was seriously wounded in the chest. Radio-Oper. T/Sgt. E.W. Morton went back to the tail of plane and pulled Mosley up to radio room and administered first aid to him.

MISSION # 39 AUG. 26th. 1944

6:05 Hrs. TARGET: AVISTO VIADUCT AVISTO, ITALY

No enemy fighters were seen on this mission. Flak was heavy, moderate and tracking type. Several had damage from flak. We got good hits on Rail-road Bridge and Supply Train.

MISSION # 40 & 41 AUG. 27th. 1944 PLANE B17 # 744

8:15 Hrs. TARGET: NORTH SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT BLECKHAMMER, GERMANY

First wave over target was 346th. Sqdn. One B-17 was hit by flak and exploded over target area. Six (6) chutes were sighted. Second wave was lead by our Sqdn. 347th. We flew lead ship Plane B-17 # 744 With Capt. Shull as Pilot. Lt. Gray as Co-Pilot. We did not observe any enemy fighters, but flak was very heavy, accurate. At target (60) heavy anti-aircraft guns were counted.

MISSION # 42 & 43 AUG. 28th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 734

7:20 Hrs. TARGET: MOOSBIERBAUM OIL REFINERY VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Saw several enemy fighters, ME-109s & ME-210s flying parallel to formation. When they turned to attack. our group fired several short bursts at them. They came in to 1000 yds. and then broke off.

Flak over target was heavy but not very accurate. Had a few flak holes in plane we flew lead ship with Pilot Maj. Katzenmeyer in plane B-17 #734. We flew with 346th. Sqdn.

MISSION #44 SEPT. 5th. 1944 PLANE B-17 # 879

6:55 Hrs. TARGET : NORTH RAIL-ROAD BRIDGE BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

No enemy fighters were seen in target area or enroute to and from target. Flak over target was heavy, barrage and tracking type. We flew # 7 position known as Tail End Charlie. In plane B-17 # 879



MISSION # 45 & 46 SEPT. 13th. 1944

8:00 Hrs. TARGET: NORTH SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY

No enemy fighters were seen on this mission. Very heavy flak over target area, intense and moderate both barrage and tracking type. Radio-Operator T/Sgt. E.W. Morton completed his fiftieth mission.

MISSION # 47 SEPT. 17th. 1944

7:05 Hrs. TARGET: BUDAPEST RAKOS RAIL-YARD BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

No enemy fighters were seen on this mission. Flak over target area was heavy, moderate, barrage and tracking type., but not very accurate. Minor damage to several of our planes.

MISSION # 48 Sept. 20th. 1944 PLANE # 397

6:15 Hrs. TARGET: SZOB RAIL-ROAD BRIDGE NEAR BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

No enemy fighters were seen on this mission. No flak over target area or to and from target. Known as a Milk-Run. Flew plane B-17 # 397

MISSION # 49 & 50 OCT. 7th. 1944

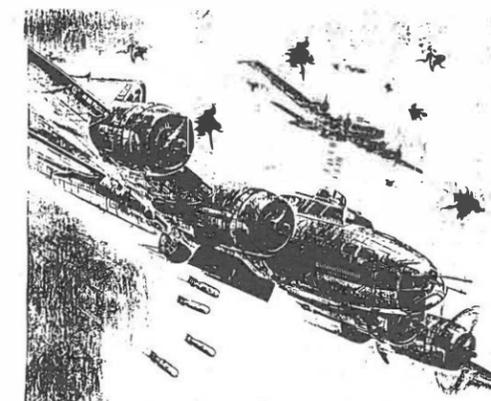
7:00 Hrs. TARGET: LOBAU OIL STORAGE DEPOT VIENNA, AUSTRIA

No enemy fighters were observed on this mission. Flak over target area was heavy, moderate to intense and very accurate. Engineer-Top Turret Gunner T/Sgt. Mike Johns completed his fiftieth mission. 242 hrs. 39 min. Combat time.

BY THE GRACE OF GOD - I BEAT THE ODDS

Some B-17s we flew:

#075	June 23rd. Polesti, Roumania	#397	Sept. 20th. Budapest, Hungary
"	July 15th. Montepalier, France	#734	Aug. 28th. Vienna, Austria
#092	May 25th. Lyons, France	#744	Aug. 22nd. Blechhammer, Germany
#196	June 26th. Vienna, Austria	"	Aug. 27th. Blechhammer, Germany
"	July 14th. Budapest, Hungary	#879	Sept. 5th. Budapest, Hungary
"	July 16th. Vienna, Austria	#925	May 14th. Placenza, Italy
"	July 25th. Linz, Austria	"	July 4th. Brasov, Roumania



Richard J. Willis III

December 23, 1943 I was sworn in U.S. Army at Fort McPherson in Atlanta, Ga. I was 18 years old, approximately 5'9" tall and weighed 135 lbs. A few days after reporting for duty I was given a series of tests and upon completion I asked to be assigned to the Army Air Corps. About 20 of us were put on the Silver Streak Club Car and we rode the train to Miami Beach, Fla. We were stationed in the Blackstone Hotel which was the largest in Miami Beach at the time. Our C.O. was called "Double Time Charlie" as we had to double time if we saw him coming down the street and we had to double time through to lobby of the hotel.

During my stay in Miami, we had a lot of physical exams, tests, did a lot of drilling at Flamingo park, pulled K.P., went out in Everglades on field trips, saw a lot of movies about Army life, heard a lot of lectures on poison gas, first aid, tore down many types of guns, and given target practice with 45 Cal. pistol, Carbine, Thompson Sub Machine gun (I got a metal for Expert with 45 and Marksmanship for others).

When training was over, about the first of April 1944, I was put on a "Cattle Car" railroad train and shipped out to Kingman, Arizona. It took 5 days and nights. Our train crossed the Mississippi River on a Ferry, a couple of cars at a time. I really enjoyed the trip since I had grown up during the depression era and had never been anywhere to amount to much. I had always been interested in History in school so I recognized a lot of the places we were going and thought about Lewis and Clark, Indians, Petrified Forest, Houston, Texas, and the Alamo, etc.

In Kingman, Arizona we got down to business with lots of classes on First Aid, Air Craft identification, We tore down 50 Cal. machine guns many times learning the names of 500 different parts and could tell them by name even blindfolded. The Air Craft Identification really bothered me at first because they would flash a picture of a plane on a screen for 1/25 of a second and we had to tell if it was friend or foe and give the name of plane. At first I could hardly see the picture, but by starring at the screen after picture was gone I could see it.

Finally the great day arrived. Ten of us prospective gunners were put on a B-17. It was a pretty bright day and I stood right behind the pilot. I'll never forget the thrill (and the fear) as the pilot pushed the throttles forward and we rolled down the runway and finally lifted into the air. In a few minutes I got use to it, and climbed up in the top turret for a real view. We flew over Boulder Dam, down in the Grand Canyon, bussed the desert floor and could see Jack Rabbits running from plane. I had a ball but about 8 of the others were in bomb bay sick as dogs. I never got air sick but this was a big problem with a lot of the crew members. We also, went up in a pressure chamber and had to wear oxygen masks!

After this we went to practice range and fired 30 Cal. machine guns mounted on turrets and 50 Cal. machine guns mounted on posts. We shot at a target mounted on a railroad track that went around in a big circle. We fired painted bullets that would mark target hits. This was to teach how to lead a plane. We were, also, given a lot of skeet shooting practice. Since I had shot dove, quail, etc. growing up, I was generally the top shooter. We, also, shot skeet from the back of a pick up and I was amazed at how many I hit. I really believe it was luck but I didn't let those Yankee Boys know it. Then it was back in the air at Yucca which was out in the desert. It was

a 110° in the shade. I usually flew in my underwear shorts We shot at targets towed by AT-6 planes and we did ground strafing. Finally after 3 months I walked across a stage, saluted' and was given my Gunner Wings, and was promoted to PFC (Praying For Corporal). I was really proud, in fact, the CO called me to his office and said my papers had caught up with me and if I wanted to I could go to OCS (Officers Candidate School). I told him I was happy just being a Gunner and I wanted to fly. Before I end this part, I met a couple of real good friends. One was Howard Woy from Jennerstown, Pa. who was later killed flying out of Italy and Allen Willis (we met at mail call when they called out "Willis" and we both yelled "Hoe". We were later to fly on same crew.

I had to say good-bye to Howard Woy when he got washed back because of air sickness. We stood under a lamp post late into the night making plans to keep in touch and to get together somewhere some day. Early the next day we boarded a train. The rumor was we were going to Lincoln, Neb. We headed that way going up in Colorado. However, plans were changed and we headed to Tampa, Fla. Just out of St. Louis, Mo. we pulled on a side track and let a fast freight pass us. About an hour out of St. Louis the freight train had a bad wreck. We had to back up and come in another way and lost a whole day. We went down through Mo., Ill, Ind., Ky, Tenn., Ga. and on to Fla. It took six days and nights. I pulled K.P. a couple of times, which wasn't too hard and you got plenty to eat. It was brought in big containers and all we had to do was dish it out in each man's mess kit. A couple of things of interest, I got in a poker game soon after we started. I only had \$1.50 and I put it all in first pot which I won along with a couple more quick games. I had about \$30 all of a sudden so I played all day and finally won \$125 which was a lot of money those days. I didn't play any more. Also, since we were on the train for so long a time, to keep us quiet, I guess, they would stop the train in the middle of nowhere and we would have to double time 2 or 3 miles. Being hot, and being in June we were a pretty smelly bunch with no showers. To make matters worst, we had windows open and going through the mountains of KY, and TENN. and the train being a steam engine with plenty of smoke we really got dirty.

We finally arrived at Tampa, Fla. in the middle of the night. The first thing we did was hit the showers. That was the best bath I ever took. We were promised a 6 day leave so were all ready to go home and show our folks and friends our wings.

The trip home to LaGrange, Ga. was made on a Greyhound bus. I probably sat on my suitcase in the middle of the aisle as travel by any type of transportation was always crowded. We always had a good time taking about what a rough time we had traveling, but we were always laughing and everyone seem to be happy in our situation, knowing we were all sharing the same problems. When I arrived home everyone seemed amazed to see I was now almost 6' tall and weighed nearly 150 pounds, and was even shaving everyday (whether I needed it or not). I got some of Mom's good cooking, went out to the farm with Dad, saw old friends on the square and at church. Every one seemed to be glad to see me and were impressed with my Gunner Wings. I really felt like I had grown up and was a man standing straight and tall, having great responsibility to represent those who loved me.

I returned to Drew Field in Tampa, Fla. where we had a lot of dental work, physical, shots, etc. We did not have to pull K.P. because we were on flying status now. I ran into my high school senior English teacher working in a Drug store. Her husband was an enlisted man and had to pull K.P. for me. Here we were assigned our crews and after a couple of weeks we shipped out to Avon Park, Fla. where we would get our overseas training.

At Avon Park we flew almost every day from 4 to 6 hours, day and night. I was an assistant engineer, however, our engineer got airsick and I think was just plain scared. He finally dropped off the crew. I had already filled in for him several times, making load lists, fueling plane, learning to transfer fuel and cranking up landing gear that would not come up. They just made me a temporary first engineer. I had to stand behind pilot to help him run check list, monitor RPM, Manifold Pressure, check fuel in each of the four main tanks every hour and do the paper work while in the air. Also, was responsible for operating top turret. I could do this but as far as working on engines on ground..forget it. One day we flew up to Jacksonville and the pilot asked me if I would like to fly plane while he went back to radio room for a cup of coffee. I said sure (the co-pilot was in right seat). After a little up and down I finally got settled down and headed down the beach for Miami. At night everyone was in the air. Sometime with thunder storms all around planes at 25,000 would be dropping practice bombs while others flew at 10,000 feet. I always wanted to be at 25M. The target was a lighted cross. The problem was there was a little town called Frostproof that had a main street and another cross street that looked like the target. This town got bombed a lot. There were quite a few accidents and a number of guys were killed. One plane on take off had an engine to fall off and fell in a large lake. One guy got out. Three more planes went through a thunderstorm and one plane broke in half and radio operator got out and the other two planes had to be scrapped. One day on a camera gunnery mission (we had movie cameras mounted on our guns) (9) P-51 fighters attacked us. I had just used up all of my film and went back to tail as gunner was sick in bomb bay. There was no film in gun but I was tracking fighters when one came in high and one came under plane and they hit just out from my tail position. I watched them all the way down and did not see any chutes. We had to

turn back a number of times because an engine was on fire or had a run-a-way prop. I began to believe it would be safer in combat. Finally after about 400 hours in the air we finished our overseas training about two weeks ahead of every one else. I guess it was because if we had something wrong with our plane we would come back, land and get other plane. One time we did this three times on one mission.

Since we had finished so early, about five crew in all, the pilots went to see CO and somehow talked him into letting us fly to Havana, Cuba. This was first time this had ever happened but they made it a practice to give guys incentive get their practice over with. I borrowed \$10 as I was broke and we were on our way. We were treated as liberators for as we rode truck into town people lined the streets to wave at us. We stayed at the International Hotel, went to Sloppy Joes (had my picture made here but tore it up --afraid my mother would see me in a bar). Six of us rented a cab for \$3.00 for the day. He took us to rum brewers, the Bastille, to see canons from the Maine, and a couple of other places I won't mention. We went to a restaurant for dinner and I had a big steak, my first shrimp cocktail (a big bowl of peeled shrimp with ice all round it). We smoked perfumed cigarettes, a Havana cigar, drank some rum, etc. Still just 18 years old, I was having a ball. The guys back at Avon were still trying to catch up when we got back.

Then I had a problem. They decided to make 9 man crews and took the Bombadeer off 1/2 the crews and 1/2 the Assistant Engineers off the others. Even though I had flown approximately 350 hours as 1st Engineer they decided to take me off and put me on another crew who was just starting their training and make me a First Engineer. After flying with new pilot a couple of times I thought I would be safer overseas. I ran into Allen Willis and they needed another man on their crew. After his pilot pulled some strings I had just two days to get processed before we shipped out. I spent one day at the dentist and they took out and redid 9 fillings, stuck a drill through my lip, and really gave me a working over. Then I had to go for physical, shots, a new issue of clothing, etc. I just made it. We shipped out to Hunter Field in Savannah, Ga. While there a hurricane hit. Most of the planes had been flown out but a number were damaged. We stayed in barracks playing cards and listen to the wind blow. The barracks next to ours was blown over but no one was really hurt. My sister, Emily, rode the bus all night from GSCW in Milledgeville, Ga. where she was going to college. She arrived at 8 AM the next morning and I met her at the front gate and took her to the Rec Center. Just as we got there my crew members came in and told me to hurry up as we were shipping out at 10 AM. I really hated to leave my sister but I had to pack, etc. I did get back to see her for a few minutes before we headed for the train.

We thought we were on our way overseas, however, the same five crews that went to Havana were picked to go to Bedford, Mass., just outside of Boston to pick up B-17s with special radar on the top turret. This would automatically work the radials on gun sight to frame enemy aircraft which we had been doing with a grip sort-of like a motorcycle gas handle. The Engineer and myself had to go to MIT for special instructions on it use.

When we arrived, they were not expecting us and told us to just stay away from camp and not bother them. I had won another \$100 on train ride so I had plenty of money to have a good time. Allen Willis, from Nashville, Tenn., Duane Yates from Dallas, Texas, and I would go to USO and various dances in Lexington (saw Minute Man statue on side of road coming into Lexington), Concord, Lowell, and a good many times we went to Boston to hear and dance to the Big Bands, ..Tommy Dorsey, Gene Krupper, Artie Shaw, etc. This was where I learned to dance as I figured I would never see the girls again if I stepped on their toes they would soon forget me. Also, when we went to a dance there were generally 150 girls and about 15 boys. They would drag you out on the dance floor and try to teach you to dance. One night at a big dance they got me, Allen Willis, a buddy named Mathews (later killed in action along with our buddies on Reeds crew) and our girlfriends and took a picture of us and put it in the Lowell Sun newspaper. I have copy in scrapbook. It was kind if hard for me as the girls were generally 23 to 28. I had just turned 19 but to make me look older I grew a mustache and had to color it with Mascara. Everytime I kissed a girl good night I left a black streak across her lips. I was also a Corporal now and I always told the girls when they asked me how old I was that I was only 16. They would laugh and say I had to be at least 23. I left it at that. One day George Goodburn, our Ball Turret gunner, and I decided to go to New York. We both bought round trip tickets from Boston and I had \$3.00 to my name. We split in New York as he had a friend in the Navy stationed there. I met and went out to eat with my first cousin, Ruth Bradfield. She took me on a bus tour and showed me sights of New York. I spent the night in a little church off Times Square (50¢ a night) ate doughnuts, cookies, at USO, went to a couple of restaurants and when I went up to pay my 35¢ to 45¢ meal they would tell me some customer who had just left had paid for me. I also went to Radio City Music Hall and saw some of the radio programs I had listened to at home. After 3 days I met George at railroad station for trip back to Boston. After paying for a trolley ride to end of town we hitch-hiked back to Bedford Field. I had 45¢ left in my pocket which was not bad considering I had a damn good time.

It was early December 1944 when we took off from Bedford, Mass. I thought we would be on our way overseas, however, they told us to go back to Savannah, Ga. for final processing. We landed in Richmond, Va. and spent the night. The next morning it was real foggy but we took off anyway. At Savannah we had to take all of our overseas shots, yellow fever, Cholera, tetanus, etc. given another physical and dental checks, and I believe we were issued 45 Cal. pistols to take with us. What we were all trying to do was to get a short furlough. They told us no one got a furlough but we were going to try anyway. After we all went in separately and it didn't work. Allen had his family wire him to come home as his father had had a heart attack. He had really had one before Allen went into service so it was true. No luck. Duane had his family wire for an emergency leave for some reason. Both of them got furloughs. About that time someone (?) closed hanger door on our plane and damaged tail. After Ben Swift had given crew chief a bottle, we all went to see C.O. and told him we could not leave without this special

plane and it would be in hanger for repairs for 2 weeks. The C.O. got mad at us. He called crew chief who confirmed condition of plane. The C.O. told us to get the hell out for six (6) days leave but we had better be back on time. I slipped in on my parents unexpected and we had a good Christmas even if it was a week before. I went by Womans Club as Emily was at a dance. With my mustache no one knew me, so we acted like strangers and had a real good time.

I went back to Hunter Field and even though we spent Christmas day on base we were all glad we got home. Many of the boys who did not get to go home were killed. We finally took off and landed in New Jersey to spend the night. The next day we started for Bangor, Me. but a bad snow storm came up and we had to turn around and go to Granier Field, Manchester, N. H. Ben Swift, Co-pilot was landing and I guess he hit a down draft and we hit a large snow bank at end of runway. Don Sherman, our pilot hit throttle and took controls and we went back up. I was sitting in radio chair listening to him call tower for landing instructions. They said they thought we had lost our tail wheel on last approach. Sure enough we did. Since the Ball turret stuck out bottom of plane we thought it might break plane into if we landed without a tail wheel. We took the guns and sights out of turret to save, unloosen bolts and when Sherman was over a large lake we all kicked it and it fell on lake. It did not even go though ice it was so cold. When we landed (Sherman did a real good job) the whole field had turned out to see us crack up. All we were fussing about was how cold it was. Next day all the other planes left. We had to wait a few weeks to get a new ball turret and get it installed. This happened to be a WAC P.O.E. and we were something special, being practically the only men available. We did not have anything to do but eat, have fun, eat, sleep, eat. The officers would borrow our clothes to date the enlisted WAC's and we would borrow their clothes to go to officers mess about 2 in the morning. Somehow I got with and dated General Summerals daughter who was in the WAC's. We would check out ice skates and the fire department would bring a truck to a field, spray it with water and it would freeze before we got our skates on. One night we finally got a pass to Manchester but were to be back at 12 o'clock P.M. We decided to go to Lowell, Mass since we still had our passes from Bedford which were Class A. We knew we could not make it back by mid-night but Swift told us not to worry about it, just tell the guard on gate we were on his crew. We got back a 6 AM and he reached for the phone to call guard house to come get us. Oscar Greenlund, our Engineer told him we were on Swifts crew and he told us to go in quietly. Swift had given him some pilot sun glasses I think. We had just gotten in our beds when a bunch of MP's came in and told us to get up we were shipping out. We told them they were crazy as hell as we were to be given 24 hour notice so we cut out lights. In a few minutes the MP's were back with the O.D. We still did not believe them but Oscar call Sherman who said we were. After a night on town, Sherman was the one who stayed in camp and was the only one fit to fly. We went out to plane and it had about a foot of snow on wing. Swift kicked once and fell off. We did the best we could and finally Sherman just cranked up the engines and blew the rest of it off.

Instead of going the northern route, they told us we could go anyway we wanted too, so Sherman and Steve Lucus (our navigator) plotted a course for Bermuda. We flew over N.Y. city and in a few hours we were going swimming in Bermuda. We liked it so well it seems something was wrong with our engines so we drug it out almost a week. They finally told us we had to leave so we took off one night about 10 P.M. I think most of the flying was done by (George--our auto-pilot). Sometime after 2 P.M. the next day we saw this tiny island called the Azoria Islands. This was not the place to be for this is where the bubonic plague started and, almost wiped out Europe a number of years ago. We left this place early the next morning and flew to Marraketch French Morroco. These were the blackest night I had ever seen. You could see a falling star and there would be a long tail behind it like a comet. We stayed here a few days and while a few slipped through a hole in the walled city, I did not want to get out with all the Arabs with long knives in their baggy pants. We flew over the desert, saw camel caravans on a sea of sand as far as you could see. Every oasis you would see there would be hundreds of planes which had been shot up and they headed for water. Along the beaches of the Mediterranean sea there were many ships along the banks that had washed ashore from battles. We landed in Tunisia and spent a couple of days here. Then we flew across to Italy and landed at Georgic, Italy. As we were unloading our plane a B-24 came screaming in with no hydraulic power and nose wheel failed as he slid down the run way on his nose with sparkes flying everywhere. We all agreed, we were here.

We flew on up to Foggia, Italy as this would be our base and were assigned to the 15th Wing, 99th Bomb Group, 416th sqdn. We were given an old tent with bullet hole in it and told to pick out a nice lot and put it up. All the lots were about knee deep in mud. We put it up, stole some ply wood from another sqdn., got a 55 gal. oil drum and cut it in half, got some old aluminum tubing out of junked planes, put up a 55 gal. tank outside the tent, made generator out of a bent pipe and hooked it up to 100 octane gas in tank and had a good stove. We kept warm with it and cooked on it. Every now and then it would blow up about 3' off the floor but never burned tent or us. We went to briefing, pulled practice missions with gunnery training, told what to do if we got shot down, etc. When we went to town we always carried our 45 Cal. pistols as every now and then some of the Italians would act up.

One day Allen, Duane, and I went to Foggia to see what was going on. They finally decided to go to USO, but I thought I would hitchhike to see Howard Woy about 20 miles from there. I caught a ride on a big gas truck and he dropped me off at the base. When I asked to see Howard I was told he was not in this sqdn. I had his address and I told him we had been corresponding. Finally an officer came in and when asked about Howard he told us he was on one of two planes that did not come through the clouds on a mission. He didn't give me much hope as they did not know when, or where it happened. I surely did feel terrible as he was really the best friend I had made in the Army. I sure felt bad for his family which was very much like mine with a school teacher mother, Dad in sales and a younger sister and brother.

We had flown a few combat missions to Vienna, Austria and we really got shot up good on every mission. They split us up at first to see how we would do in combat. One mission we went on to Vienna we had over 50 hole the size of your fist and many other small hole. One large shell or something went right between me and the other waist gunner. I thought he was dead as he was lying on the floor but he was throwing out chaft to jam the German radar. A lot of the guys had been over there for months and didn't seem to be in any hurry to get their missions over (had to do 35). Me, I was an eager beaver and I had told them to put me on a crew if they needed an extra man. We all checked the load list after supper and none of us was on it. We went to day room to shoot some crap, have a gin and grapefruit juice, but for some reason I told my crew I was going back to check load list. Sure enough I was on number 3 standby crew. I understood they had lost a man in combat and they were just sending them up again, sort of like getting back on a horse if it throws you. Standby crews took off with group and if anyone developed engine trouble (or got a little concerned about where we were going) and went home the standby plane filled in. Our plane 397 still had flack hole from day before and being #3 standby I didn't think we would have to go. However, the target was way up close to Berlin which would stretch your gas beside being a very rough target. The target was Rueland, Germany. They made synthetic gas for the new Me 262 Jet Fighters the Germans had. The date was March 23, 1945.

We did pretty good until we turned on the target run. We were hit by flack almost at once. Number 2 engine caught on fire and it would not go out. We were dropping back out of formation when we got hit on the #3 engine. It really started burning and the cowling started flying off. The landing gear dropped out, and they said up front the #3 prop came off. We finally dropped our bombs and the flack was really popping around us. The pilot turned toward the German/Russian lines and told us to prepare to bail out. He never rang a bailout bell and landed 30 miles or more from some of us. I was trying to get waist door off as it was open but would not come off. Radio operator (Beal) said he was going but got stuck in door. We were told later when they bailed out up front we were in a dive and going 400 mph. I put my foot on radio operator and gave him a good kick. The other crew members said they were going back to tail door and go out. We were beginning to get in a flat spin and the gravity was pulling very heavy. I decided to hit the door with my shoulder and go out, which I did and loss a boot in the process. I turned at least 50 flips going under tail but since I was still pretty high and I waited until I stopped spinning before I pulled my chute. When it finally opened, it was quite a sudden stop. I could see plane, anti-aircraft shells bursting, but I couldn't hear anything it seem like for several minutes. Finally my ears popped and I could hear machine gun and small gun fire bullets passing very close to me. I looked up and had some holes in my chute. I thought it was a fighter straffing me as I had seen one a 3 o'clock just before we got hit so bad (I was told later by tail gunner two fighters made one pass on us but I did not see them). It turned out

to be from the ground so I put my 45 pistol up and played dead. I thought about Mom and Dad getting MIA telegrams from War Department and then thought about them getting KIA telegrams instead. I said the 23 psalm on the way down and I was not afraid. I know the Lord was with me for those bullets sounded like a bunch of angry hornets. Finally I hit the ground, rolled like you are supposed to, pulled down my chute and looked around. There were dead soldiers on ground but I didn't see any live one. In checking so far I had just lost a boot, had a hole in my flight jacket I believe was a bullet hole but I seemed ok. The sun was at my back so I headed East. It was about 2 P. M. I finally came to a large open field and there were woods on other side. I did not see anyone and got about half way before I heard a motorcycle and ran behind a large stack of wood. I thought I would try to get my GI shoes on as I was without a shoe on one foot and there was snow on ground and very cold. I had put a small cable through the eye of my shoes and when chute opened it really tightened this up. With my fingers so cold I had a hard time getting them loose but finally did.

Just before dark a car pulled up on field and three young boys got out with machine guns, spread out and started across field. They could not see me, but I only had a 45 pistol and I knew if I took a shot I would be killed. As they got closer, I hung my 45 with a round in chamber in my torn holster and promised if they shot at me I would shoot all my bullets at them. They came running up and one stuck a machine gun in my belly. Another stuck a pistol in my face. They grabbed and snatched my watch off my arm, took my pistol, and knife. Slashed across my heated suit and all wires fell out but did not cut me. They didn't have on uniforms so I thought they were Hitler Youths. I had been told to say Amerconski Losa (American Airman). I might not have said it right because everytime I said it (about twice) they slapped the heck out of me, so I shut up. They took me up to a car and there was a soldier who had on a uniform. I saw the Hammer and Sickle which was a Russian insignia. No one could speak English and I sure couldn't speak Russian so I was real quiet. They took me into a town on the front and I could see bodies of soldiers, horses, cows, all over the place. Smoking trucks, abandon vehicles, bodies stacked up with a large bull dossier digging a big hole to put them in, hearing machine gun, rifle fire and an explosion now and then I guess was hand grenades

We finally got to a house about dark and with a body hanging out a window, and one on ground they pushed me into a dark cellar. Finally my eyes got accustomed to the darkness and I saw a man sitting quietly not far from me. He had a heavy beard and I wondered how long he had been there. Finally I asked if he spoke English and was surprise when he said yes. I ask him how long he had been there and he said he was shot down the day before. That was about all I ever got from him. He seemed like he was in shock. Later that night they brought in another guy. When I ask him who's crew he was on and he said Lea's I knew I was on same plane. None of us saw anyone else

after we bailed out and I did not know any of the fellows on the crew as I was just a substitute.

Some time before morning they brought in another member of Lea's crew. The first one was Jack Burch from Mint Hill, N. C. just outside of Charlotte. The other one was a boy named Marcus from California and a real screw ball. I had hid two Baby Ruth candy bars, three packs of cigarettes, a compass and some first aid stuff in a little pocket on my right leg that was made for a bailout bottle. This bottle held 1700 pounds of oxygen, and I was told that if a piece of flack or a bullet hit it, my leg would be blown off. I threw it away. I was glad to have the candy as we did not get anything to eat the next day. I did share my cigarettes until I found out Jack had not smoked before and he was bumming me for cigarettes. I told him to forget it and I guess that is why I did not tell them about my candy.

You could hear gun fire from where we were, but we were not exposed to fire. On third day they took us upstairs. This seemed to be a temporary headquarters as there were a number of what looked like high ranking Russian Officers. One of them took us to a room and said he spoke English (?). We did understand him. He wanted to know where we were from and what we were doing there. We did not tell him where we were from but when he showed us a map we ran our hand over Germany and said we had bombed it. This seemed to satisfy him and that night about 8 oclock they took us again. This time they asked us (in sign language) to eat with them. We had about 9 courses consisting of bean soup, cabbage, horse meat, black smelly bread, etc. I didn't complain as I was "hongry". After each course there was a toast..they made some and we made some. We were feeling pretty good (?). Marcus had passed out, Jack did not drink much, and I knew what was going on but I felt numb. I asked this high ranking officer at end of table for my 45 pistol back and much to my surprise he said something to another officer and in a few minutes they gave it to me. I thought surely they did not give it back to me loaded. When I pulled back the cocking slide I saw it was fully loaded and ready to go. I, also, caught out of the corner of my eye the Russian bodyguard by door, quickly raise his machine gun and had it pointed at me. Believe me I really froze in my tracks. The Russian officer said something and the Russian soldier lowered his gun. I quickly put my gun up too.

About 11 P.M. we lay down where ever we could. Marcus in a chair, Jack on a cot and me on a couch. About 3 A.M. they got us up and we got in an old pickup truck. In about 15 minutes we heard gun fire and a couple of Russian soldiers ran up and made us turn around. We kept doing this until day light when we got to a large grass field. There were Yak fighter planes and several American p-39 fighter plane our government had given the Russians. A C-47 with a top turret and bomb holders under wings was there. They loaded to bodies, 2 Russian women soldiers with machine guns, and us on board. About that time a German

FW-190 made a pass over field. The Yak fighters took off in what ever direction they were headed. We took off and just picked up landing gear and jumped trees back to Lwow, Poland. Here we were put up in an old bombed out hotel and some of the other crew members showed up. We had a little freedom but there was generally a guard around somewhere. We went up to a Jockey Lot and bought a few items to take home, lighters made out of shells, etc. (We had an excape pack they gave us before each mission. It contained silk maps , compus, and 48 American dollars. The bank would give you 5 Russian rubles for a dollar, but we found out we could sell them for 40 rubles per dollar.) We would go to a little coffee shop, have tea and a hard cookie. In hotel there was kind of a bar they would roll up a keg of beer from the ice house in the basement (ice they cut out of river during winter) and we would just have to sign for it. I was afraid to drink the water and since the beer was free I even brushed my teeth with it.

Finally they put us on a C-47 (there must have been about 25 of us who had excaped) and flew us to Poltava, Russia. Here they had a small American compound. There were Russian guards around us, but we got a little better food and there were appromimately 75 to 100 men waiting to go out. They would send in planes now and then to bring supplies and airmen would fly back with them to Iran, Cairo, Trippoli ,Italy and England. While here we here Easter arrived. We woke up Easter morning (our breath had frozen outside our sleeping bag, and it was real cold. About 5 or 6 of us and went across a real cold field to a small tent the chaplain had set up with three candles on a table. Here we had Sunrise Easter service and we thanked the lord for being with us. About this time Pres. Roosevelt died and we were ready to get out of this place. About 6 of us worked on a B-17 with a lot of holes in it and got all the engines to run. We talked them into letting us fly it around the field and it did pretty good. The plane had been stripped of guns, oxygen, etc. but it was flyable. We told them we would fly it back to Italy. They finally agreed and about 6 of us took off early one morning. About 30 to 45 minutes after we left they called us to return. We decided to go ahead and cut off radio. We ran into some fog and could not get over it because we had no oxygen and 17,000 feet was all the high we wanted to go. We flew over the black sea, Bulgari, Yugoslavia, Adriatic Sea and landed at Barrie, Italy that afternoon about 3 P.M. They junked the plane but we only lost one engine due to oil pressure on the trip back to Italy.

At Barrie they let us take a shower, shave and gave us new clothing. After 40 days of wearing, sleeping in, working in them they were in pretty bad shape, and kind of smelly too. They called our base in Foggia, Italy and they sent a plane down for us. When we started letting down our landing gear I saw a big bubble on the right landing gear wheel. The pilot came back and checked it and we knew it was going to blow out when we hit the ground. The field had fire trucks and others waiting for us when we landed. Pilot landed on left wheel and kept it on this wheel as long as posible. When it finally hit

the wheel blew and we ran off side of runway and did not do much damage. We had to be de-briefed and were put on a truck to the 416th sqdn. my home squadron. Allen was out brushing his teeth and was really surprised to see me. We had a good get together that night with a couple of bottles of vodka I brought back.

After returing to Foggia, Italy I was promoted to Staff Sargeant given write up about kicking Beal our of plane and handling myself in a military manner and someother stuff. They gave me an Air Metal to go with my European theater, with three battle stars, Good Conduct metal and a Caterpillow Pin for bailing out to save my life. (Parachutes were made of silk at one time) I was put on flying status again and flew a couple of milk run missions before the war ended.

V-E Day when Germany surrendered was something else. I have never seen a 4th of July display like that. The ground crew got in all the B-17 and shot tracer bullets in the air. They also, fired the emergency flares we had in the planes. It was really dangerous to be anywhere as the bullets could fall right through our tents. Of course there was a lot of partying going own. We stayed in our tent and had a big party there. One friend of mine went to the day room and one of the fellow was pretty drunk. They took him to his tent when all of a sudden he pulled a knife and cut my friend neck from ear to ear. His friend tried to stop him and he was cut across the face. A Sergeant walked in and held a 45 pistol on him until they could get my friend to a hospital. This boy had just been release from hospital because he was " flack happy". We , also, flew supplies up to Trieste which is just under the Alps for the British. We bussed the island of Capri, flew around Vesuvius as it was smoking. I went on several flights as first engineer when we flew the ground crew up to see some of the combat areas where we had been bombing.

One day, when my crew had all gone to town, I was called to headquarters and was told since I had been shot down and reported Missing in Action I could go home. The other choice was to stay for occupation duty. At first I said I would stay and then thought about flying on all the war weary planes and I decide I would be crazy not to go on home. I told them I would and was shipped to another sqdn. We flew home on a B-24 and had several close calls, from engines quitting on take-off to gas caps flying off just as we took off. This plane had a bad record for just blowing up. We flew from Italy to Marrachetch, to the Azoria Island and to Newfoundland. The last trip home to Bradley Field, Conn. was on Friday 13, 1945. With all the troubles we had along the way I was not sure we would make it. It was a real nice flight and was good to see the good old U.S.A. again. When I arrived back in states I still had four months to go before I was 20 years old. I had seen a lot, lost a lot of friend, and felt like I was much older and wiser.

We were shipped back to Ft. McPherson in Atlanta, Ga. where I had started . We were processed and given a 21 day furlough.

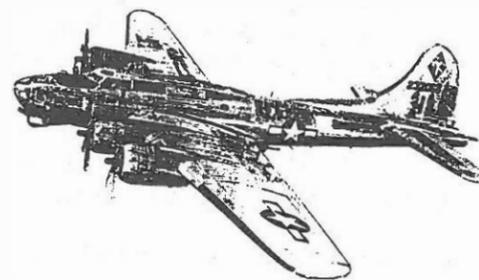
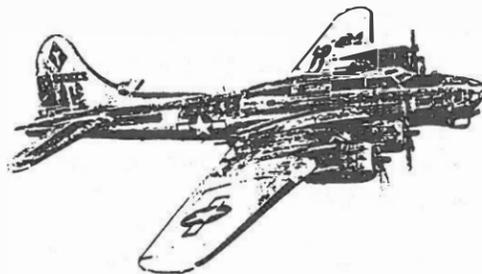
The war was still going on with Japan and I was to go to Iowa to train as a B-29 engineer. As I was going through Atlanta, on my way to Greensboro, N. C. word was received the "BOMB" had been dropped and Japan had surrendered. The war with Japan and Germany was now over.

In Greensboro they didn't know what to do with us so I just rambled around. I got with a couple of twins Bob and Bill Davis from Cave Springs, Ga. Bill and I flew back together and Bob had been a prisoner of war and had gotten home before we did. We went out to Brown Summit to see some of Tom Lambeth, my brother-in-law's people. They were pulling tobacco and had a bunch of cool watermelons ready to cut. We went through the R J Reynolds cigarette plant, went to Salem, went to a lot of dances. I, also, went by High Point to see Doug Reeds family. (he was killed).

They gave me a choice of training to be a B-29 engineer and going out West or being a clerk non typist and being sent to Albany, Georgia and being in charge of cadet records. This is what I took and had a real great time here with dances, going home on 3 day passes, visiting places I had gone as a very little boy when my Dad was traveling. He would take the whole family for a month and the Albany Hotel was right across the street from the fire department which I really liked.

Finally my two years were up and I had enough points to get out, but when I asked my CO to let me get my discharge he offered me First Sergeant strips but I would have to stay in another year. Also, the cadets were getting out of service for convenience of the government and I had been up to my neck processing them. They could not talk me out of getting out, so I was shipped out to Maxwell Field, Alabama. Here I got my last physical, shots checks, mustering out pay, and most important a Honorable Discharge Paper. I ran out of the gate and caught a bus for home. My Mom and Dad did not know I was coming and I surprised them kinda late that night.

Well that was my two years in the Army Air Corp. I had seen a lot of the world, grown up, had some life threatening experiences, lost some good friends, did a lot of things, saw a lot of places and things most people will never see in their life time. I hope I came out a better person and have often felt when I had an opportunity to do something good, I would do it in the name of some of my friends who never got the chance. Thank you, Lord, for being with me.



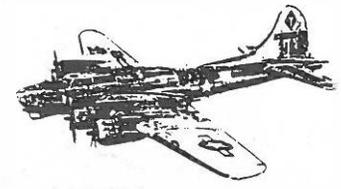
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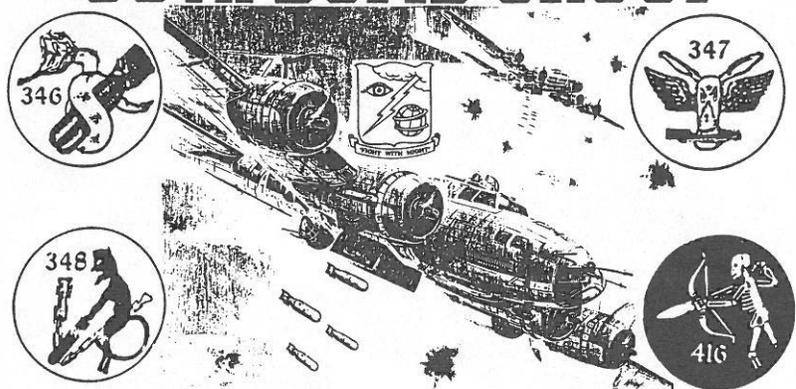


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