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Operations: February 1944

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY - MISSION NO. 139 - FEBRUARY 2, 1944
Captain Joseph Bigham, CO, 49th Squadron, led 38 aircraft to bomb the Tokal Aircraft Factory at Budapest. The formation was recalled by 5th Wing after reaching a point 15 miles south, southeast of Split, Yugoslavia because of weather.

TOULON, FRANCE - MISSION NO. 140 - FEBRUARY 4, 1944

Major Bradford A. Evans, CO, 96th Squadron, led 30 aircraft and dropped 90 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Toulon Harbor area. There was a moderate amount of accurate flak. Between 20 to 30 enemy fighters started their attack at bombing time and continued for about 20 minutes. These attacks, along with the flak accounted for the loss of one life, one injury and loss of one B-17.

Killed was Sgt. Charles J. Rheinheimer, TG, 49th Squadron, by 20mm shell fragment. 2nd Lt. Dale Wilkinson, B, 96th Squadron, suffered a moderate flak wound, right cheek. B-17 #42-29903, 49th Squadron, was last seen approximately 55 miles southwest of Toulon and was the victim of enemy fighters.

Photos showed a direct hit on a merchant vessel; direct hits on rolling stock and buildings; some direct hits on a battleship hull; direct hits on a dock and other installations. Fortress gunners claims were: Each credited with the destruction of a Me-109 were S/Sgt. Clyde A. Bridges, LW, 49th Squadron and T/Sgt. William C. Payne, LT, 96th Squadron. Each credited with the destruction of a FW-190 were T/Sgt. Adolph (NMI) Sevruck, UT, 96th Squadron and T/Sgt. Emile H. Carle, UT, 429th Squadron. Each credited with the possible destruction of a FW-190 were Sgt. Andrew W. Warga, LT, 20th Squadron and T/Sgt. Herman (NMI) Sussman, UT, 96th Squadron.

Terrific headwinds were encountered en route and only four A/C got back to Base. One A/C went to Ajaccio and the remainder landed at Chisonaccia, Corsica to refuel.

MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT: A/C #42-29903 - "HIGH TENSION II" - 429TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Rutherford G. Bingham, 0-724375, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Dabney H. Lea, 0-799413, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Lawrence T. Armstrong, 0-683890, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Hamilton M. Lamb, 0-681544, B.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Corbin M. Doolittle, 12138213, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Robert K. Slocum, 35539779, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Frederick M. Lemon, Jr., 19174381, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Max (NMI) Copp, 17091979, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Rex D. Power, 14124924, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	John M. Lawry, 18051017, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of S/Sgt. John J. Kilgalen, TG on B-17 #684, after the mission: "I first noticed #903 when it was going towards France. The plane was at approximately 10,000 feet. It seemed to be in a long glide and I saw five or six parachutes, which looked like they came out of the waist or tail. I observed that the chutes came down in the water. Then E/A attacked us and I lost sight of #903."

ALBANO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 141 - FEBRUARY 10, 1944

Thirty-six aircraft dropped 106 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the town of Albano. Photos showed hits in the eastern section of town; heavy concentrations of hits on buildings near main highway; one severe explosion in buildings at southeast section of town. This mission was in support of troops at Anzio. Flak, both heavy and light type, was intense and accurate due to the low bombing altitude necessary to get under an undercast. Casualties included: Sgt. George R. Appleton, TG, 49th Squadron, instantly killed, flak wound to neck; 2nd Lt. John E. Sullivan, B, 20th Squadron, severe flak wounds head, cheek, hands; S/Sgt. Alva L. Flowers, TG, 20th Squadron, severe flak wounds right hip; 1st Lt. Charles T. Kirkpatrick, P, 49th Squadron, severe flak wound and plexiglass cuts; 2nd Lt. Davis W. Paris, N, 49th Squadron, severe flak wound left leg and compound fracture of medial-condyle of tibia; 1st Lt. John F. Adams, N, 429th Squadron, laceration on right wrist from flak; and S/Sgt. Albert E. Smith, UT, 429th Squadron, abrasion left leg from flak.

Two planes were lost. #42-31422, 20th Squadron, disintegrated in the air about four miles south of Albano. Major Robert J. Lundell had just joined the Squadron and was flying his first mission.

Plane #42-5773, 429th Squadron, had two engines feathered and the right wing was on fire when it left the formation. On the 19th, word was received that a U.S. Naval patrol craft had found the bodies of Sgts. Scott, Groover and Carter. The bodies of the other seven members of the crew are still missing.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-5773 - "SCRUBBY OL' GOAT - 429TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Raymond W. Bosmans, 0-739713, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. Paul E. Horne, 0-804665, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. George R. Carney, 0-738614, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. William R. Kemp, 0-679543, B.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Duane H. Nolder, 13107310, U/T.	(KIA)
Sgt. Raymond P. Scott, 19066460, L/T.	(KIA)
Sgt. Leon D. Able, 32473062, R/W.	(KIA)
Sgt. Robert T. Groover, 39326552, L/W.	(KIA)
Sgt. Frank N. Perry, 18128849, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Cary E. Carter, 39560467, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of 1st Lt. James Long, P of B-17 #129, after the mission: "At approximately five minutes after bombs away, I noticed that the right wing of #773 was on fire at the rear of it, in the vicinity of the No. 4 engine. Soon afterwards he called me and asked if it was still burning. As #773 pulled out of the formation, he said he was going to head for the nearest land. At that time we were north-northwest of Anzio, about 11 miles. At this time #773 had two good engines and No. 2 had been feathered on the bomb run. This was the last I saw of #773 and the plane was under control and about 10,000 feet. The flames did not seem to get any larger than at the beginning, which was about a six-inch flame coming from the slots aft of the wing."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - A/C #42-31422 - 20TH SQUADRON

Captain Fred R. Licence, 0-795059, P.	(KIA)
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Major	Robert J. Lundell, 0-396532, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	George A. Hackett, 0-693820, N.	(POW)
1st Lt.	Walter D. Walling, 0-732287, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Robert H. Bentley, 38209975, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Elton C. Collins, 34266218, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	William A. Bruner, 38465887, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Earl A. Bryant, 38371096, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Harry C. Dalls, Jr., 39462540, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Robert R. Dubberly, 14014839, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of S/Sgt. John B. McMullin, TG on B-17 #42-29628, after the mission: "Aircraft #42-31422 was flying ahead of us in the first element of the lead Squadron. Our pilot told us over the interphone that #422 was leaving the formation with an engine on fire. When I first spotted #422, only the No. 4 engine was on fire but almost instantly No. 3 caught fire too. The entire right wing seemed suddenly to burst into flames in a few seconds. A portion of the wing broke off carrying No. 4 with it. The nose of the aircraft dropped and the ship made a violent roll and began to break up. I was especially interested to see if any chutes left the aircraft and paid little attention to the various pieces as they burned and fell to earth. I saw only two chutes open. Both appeared to open 5,000 to 6,000 feet below our altitude as we were at about 12,000 feet."

Statement of 1st Lt. George A. Hackett, N, after liberation: "I was unconscious from injuries when Lt. Walling pushed me out of the plane. I have no knowledge of any others of the crew. Lt. Walling was in the same prison camp, Stalag Luft I, Barth Germany."

S/Sgt. Robert H. Bentley, Flight Engineer, was on the original crew of Lt. Thomas Finch when assigned to the 20th Squadron. September 30, 1991: "We were given a brand new B-17 at Grand Island, Nebraska and we named her "WILDFIRE." We flew her to North Africa but while we were waiting for a crew assignment in Casablanca, Group took it away and assigned it to some other crew. We never saw nor heard of it again. Another bucket of bolts we flew was "READY TEDDY-THE LAST OF ITSABITCHIS." They probably scrapped it for parts. I recall returning from one mission over Athens, Greece with over 100 holes in the plane.

"The mission of 2-10-44 to Albano, Italy would have been my 46th had it been completed. Our pilot was Capt. Licence, Squadron Commander; co-pilot was Major Lundell. He was not a member of the Squadron, but was a training officer from Rapid City, South Dakota, and had brought some replacements from the States. He wanted to fly a combat mission while in Italy. He picked the wrong "MILK RUN."

"I don't recall any of the other crew members except Lt. Walling. We were hit by ground fire (of all things, tanks) and our plane exploded in mid-air. To the best of my knowledge, Lts. Walling and Hackett, and myself, were the only survivors. I ran into Walling at Camp Lucky Strike after liberation from prison camp and he said that Lt. Hackett survived but badly hurt and doubted if he made it back to the States.

"I always wondered about my original crew. Lt. Finch, my pilot, and Harold Ross were shot down on January 10, 1944 on a mission to Sofia, Bulgaria. I have had contact with Donald Swank and he told me that Lt. Finch was killed and Walter Kluttz, the other waste gunner, was killed because he saw him when he was hit. Donald Swank died September 18, 1991. I sure would like to know what happened to the rest of the crew."

CECCHINA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 142 - FEBRUARY 12, 1944

Major Donald Ainsworth, Group Operations Officer, led 20 aircraft to bomb the town of Cecchina, a town south of Albano. The Group was recalled by 5th Wing because of weather.

VERONA, ITALY/MODENA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 143 - FEBRUARY 14, 1944

Major Walter Kutschera, CO 429th Squadron, led 35 aircraft to bomb Marshalling Yards at Verona. Due to 10/10 cloud cover, only five dropped their bombs in that vicinity. Six others tried to hit railroad bridges and 24 bombed Marshalling Yards at Modena. Flak at Modena was moderate and fairly accurate causing slight damage to seven B-17s. Strike photos at Modena showed hits through tracks, rolling stock, warehouses and all lines in the central section; direct hits and near misses on industrial buildings, steel works and factory areas. No injuries and no losses.

CASSINO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 144 - FEBRUARY 15, 1944

The target was the Monte Cassino Monastery with all Groups of the 5th Wing participating. Major Bradford Evans, CO 96th Squadron, led 36 aircraft of the Group and dropped 108 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs. Strike photos showed direct hits in the east and west halves. One severe explosion occurred in the east wing. There were several direct hits on small buildings in the courtyard and direct hits on approach roads. No injuries, no losses. Leaflets were dropped prior to bombing, warning the people in the Monastery of the impending bombing. Later, the Allies learned that the Germans had never occupied the Monastery.

STAZ DI CAMPOLEONE, ITALY - MISSION NO. 145 - FEBRUARY 17, 1944

Thirty-six aircraft dropped 51.84 tons of 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on the town of Staz Di Campoleone. This bombing was in support of the troops at Anzio. Seven enemy aircraft were seen, none attacking the Group. Flak was moderate to intense causing the loss of B-17 #42-38067, 49th Squadron, and slightly damaging 18 B-17s. Observers stated that the plane was hit by flak and on fire. Five chutes were seen.

Strike photos showed strings of hits from southwest of the railroad junction extending through it and to the northwest. There were hits on vehicles, equipment and installations.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38067 - "MAIDIN USA" - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Adrian D. Cooper, 0-792433, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	Edgar A. Davidson, 0-739739, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	John L. Gill, 0-732717, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Fred S. Turnquist, 0-774951, B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	George R. Hawk, 15058822, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Duane J. Booth, 37659151, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Harvey J. Dupuis, 14099673, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Lawrence (NMI) Carastro, 14136149, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert C. Rebstock, 15015834, T/G.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Jack B. Griffith, 12045333, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of S/Sgt. Harvey J. Dupuis, after liberation: "I believe we were at about the I.P. when we were hit by flak. I bailed out and Sgt. Carastro bailed out right after me. T/Sgt. Hawk rode the plane down and was taken to a hospital by the Germans. Lt. Turnquist may have bailed out. I was only allowed to look at Lt. Turnquist's body for awhile before being turned away.

"The plane struck the ground between the enemy and our lines. It had not burned but was scattered all over the neighborhood. I was not allowed to look into the other parts. I cannot say whether the rest were in the plane or had attempted to bail out.

"I do not know if Lts. Cooper or Davidson bailed out. I believe they were killed, as we were hit very hard by the flight deck. I was told by T/Sgt. Hawk that he had seen Lt. Gill at Barth prison camp, alive. I don't believe S/Sgt. Rebstock bailed out. Our first hit was a direct burst in the tail and probably killed him. S/Sgt. Booth was the ball turret, without a chute, and I don't think he got out. The last conversation I heard from him was something about flak. The last time I talked to S/Sgt. Griffith, to ask about the time, was about 1040. He was not hurt at that time. He probably crashed with the ship. The last time I saw him he was with his parachute and ready to jump. He may have been pinned when the ship went into a spin."

S/Sgt. Carastro, LW. June 12, 1991: "Our aircraft was named "MAIDIN USA" with a picture, above the name, of a beautiful girl stretched out horizontally, being carried in a diaper by a stork.

"The mission for the day was to the Anzio Beach-head. I believe we were the lead Squadron, the 49th. The bomb run was three minutes. Our bomb bay doors were open and I guess about a minute on the bomb run, when we received a direct hit in the cockpit and another on our right wing. Our pilot, Lt. Cooper, and co-pilot, Lt. Davidson, were killed immediately. The aircraft started falling and spiraling down. The waist door would not open and finally the tail broke off and that is how Harvey (S/Sgt. Dupuis) and I got out. We landed in the front lines and were captured immediately. The first words I heard from the Germans were, "For you the war is over." So, it was POW for the rest of the war.

"In addition to our pilot and co-pilot, the bombardier, Lt. Turnquist, radio gunner Sgt. Jack Griffith, lower turret gunner S/Sgt. Duane Booth, and tail gunner S/Sgt. Robert Rebstock lost their lives.

"The other four of us, navigator Lt. John Gill, upper turret gunner T/Sgt. George Hawk, right waist gunner S/Sgt. Harvey Dupuis, and I became prisoners of war."

The code name was "ARGUMENT" but February 20 through February 25, 1944 was commonly called "THE BIG WEEK" in the annals of the United States Air Forces in the European Theater of Operations. Six days of aerial operations had been planned for the Eighth Air Force, operating from Bases in England, and the Fifteenth Air Force, operating from Bases in Italy. The object of this operation was to smash aircraft factories, air fields and the Luftwaffe in the air.

The Allied concern was the presence of the German Air Force over the beaches during the coming invasion. It was a major concern that a strong concentration of enemy fighters and bombers would be disastrous to the landing operations.

It was unfortunate that, during this period, the Allied Forces at Anzio were in danger of being pushed off the beaches. All available aircraft, fighters, medium bombers, and heavy bomber in the Italian Theater, were being called upon to bomb German troop concentrations, rail lines, Marshalling Yards, bridges, towns and airfields throughout all of German held Italy. The Fifteenth Air Force's number one priority was to support the ground troops in Italy.

Weather was a continuing problem at this time both in England and Italy. It was determined that both Air Forces must have good weather for at least three days to accomplish their appointed missions. The Fifteenth, in addition to the weather, had the Adriatic Sea and those ominous Alps to cross. Many of the B-17s were older models and did not have the fuel range necessary to get to some targets. Some had been fitted with Tokyo tanks and those were used for the long missions. As a result, it was not possible to assemble as large a striking force as the planners desired. To compensate for this, shorter range diversionary strikes were planned, hopefully, to draw enemy fighters away from the long range strikes. The Germans were not fooled by these tactics.

The month of January had been a good flying month for the 2nd Bomb Group; 23 missions in 31 days. February was a different story. From the 1st through the 19th, due to poor weather, only six missions had been flown.

REGENSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 146 - FEBRUARY 20, 1944

Twenty-nine aircraft took off led by Captain Harold Chrishmon, CO 20th Squadron, to bomb the Messerschmitt Aircraft Factory at Regensburg. All planes returned at 1127 hours due to a solid overcast off the Italian coast, north of Lake Lesina. B-24s bombed the Anzio Beach-head German troop concentrations.

FEBRUARY 21, 1944

A briefing was held and the assigned target was the Littorio Marshalling Yards in Rome. Crews went to their planes and orders were received canceling the mission due to weather.

OLCHING, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 147 - FEBRUARY 22, 1944

The combat crews were briefed to bomb the Prufening Plant at Regensburg, Germany on the long range mission. Alternate targets were the Messerschmitt Factory at Augsburg, Austria, Railroad Bridges and Marshalling Yards at Bolzano, Italy or Innsbruck, Austria, or Marshalling Yards at Trento or Padua, Italy.

The Group got over Regensburg but a 10/10 cloud cover prevented bombing. Instead of bombing any of the alternate targets, the Group attacked the small town and Marshalling Yards at Olching, Germany, 11 miles north of Munich. Twenty-one aircraft dropped 42 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs and 12.6 tons of 100-lb. incendiary bombs on the target. Direct hits were recorded on the railroad both to the right and left of a canal probably cutting the line in two places. It was first reported that they had bombed the town of Peterhausen, 19 miles north-northeast of Munich, but it was later reported to have been Olching.

There were no encounters with enemy fighters, but moderate, fairly accurate flak injured three airmen. Those injured were: 2nd Lt. John W. Carney, N, 96th Squadron, laceration to scalp; S/Sgt. Anthony Gruchawka, WG, 96th Squadron, laceration on left leg and right cheek; S/Sgt. Clem R. Pelligrino, WG, 96th Squadron, severe wounds on face and right leg.

One plane was lost but not as a result of enemy action. B-17 #42-38134, 429th Squadron, was last sighted on the way to the target, 66 miles east of Ancona, Italy. Observers saw smoke in the cabin, the aircraft went into a diving spin, disappearing into the clouds. Eight chutes were seen.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38134 - "BLOW IT OUT YOUR..." 429TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Frederick W. Melzer, 0-800382, P.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Arliegh C. Honeycutt, 0-740814, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Ralph N. Gjertsen, 0-739086, N.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Thomas F. Julian, 0-67953, B.	(DED)
T/Sgt. Thurman D. Graves, 35366673, U/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Howard (NMI) Bessey, 32733214, L/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Clair J. Smith, 365259256, R/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Charlie (NMI) Martin, 35449988, L/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Bernard F. Devoe, 11110735, T/G.	(DED)
T/Sgt. Israel M. Berkowitz, 13151681, R/O.	(DED)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Clifford E. Magnuson, Pilot of B-17 #527, 429th Squadron, after the mission: "I first noticed that the cockpit on B-17 #134 looked like the windows were frozen over. Ship #134 was flying in the first wave, third squadron, second element, #1 position. About one minute later, I saw flames coming out the side windows. Ship #134 turned to the left in a slight bank and then up into a vertical climb and then fell off, going down in a spin. I saw the emergency radio going out and then I saw eight chutes. Ship #134 disappeared into the clouds. I turned back at 43-40N - 14-50E and let down through the overcast. I was at an altitude of 14,500 feet and let down to 3,000 feet and circled the area for 35 minutes. I directed my radio operator to send calls to Air-Sea-Rescue and Malta was the only station that answered and gave me a fix. I called "Big Fence" and gave them the coordinates."

ZAGREB, YUGOSLAVIA - MISSION NO. 148 - FEBRUARY 22, 1944

This was a short range mission briefed to bomb the Airdrome at Graz, Austria. Alternates were Harbor Installations and Shipping at Sibenek, Yugoslavia. Due to a complete overcast at the primary target, Captain Harold Chishmon, CO 20th Squadron, led 17 aircraft and dropped 27 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs on the Airdrome at Zagreb. There was no resistance other than slight flak with no damage nor injury. Visual observation noted that the bombs fell to the west end of the field and did no damage to it. One early return bombed Sibenek and bombs fell to the right of the harbor and town.

B-24s bombed Regensburg, Germany and Sibenek, Yugoslavia. Other B-17 Groups of B-17s bombed Regensburg.

STEYR, AUSTRIA - MISSION 149 - FEBRUARY 23, 1944

Major Walter F. Kutschera, CO 429th Squadron, led 32 aircraft to bomb the Daimler-Puch Aircraft Components Parts Factory at Steyr, Austria. A 10/10 cloud cover 110 miles north of Foggia forced the Group to turn back.

B-24s and other B-17 Groups got through the weather and bombed Steyr, Austria.

STEYR, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 150 - FEBRUARY 24, 1944

Major Walter F. Kutschera, CO 429th Squadron, took off with 35 aircraft and 25 got over the target and dropped 75 tons of 500-lb. bombs on the Aircraft Components Parts Factory at Steyr.

The mission was a most disastrous day for the Group, losing 14 aircraft to enemy fighters. Fighters started attacking the Group at 1215 hours about five miles north of Fiume, Italy and continued for one hour. It was estimated that the attacking force consisted of 58 Me-109s, 25 Me-110s, 10 FW-190s, 10 Ju-88s, 6 Me-210s, and 1 Ma-202. They came in as close as 50 yards from all around the clock, singly, in pairs, four, six, and eight abreast. Some twin engine fighters stayed out of range firing rockets, then coming in for the attack. Other single engine fighters dropped aerial bombs. One group of fighters would attack, go out of range, reform and attack again. In the meantime, another group would be attacking so there was always a continuous attack on the Group. The only time the attacks stopped, in force, was when the Group was in the flak over the target, although a few continued to attack. Then the attacks continued. Finally, the P-38 escort arrived and saved the rest of the formation. In addition to the loss of 14 aircraft, nine men were injured, nine other planes were damaged by fighters and five damaged by flak.

The 2nd Bomb Group was the last of three B-17 Groups to go over the target. B-24s were to have been a part of the striking force, 10 minutes behind the 2nd Bomb Group. Group did not arrive. Consequently, the 2nd Bomb Group took the brunt of the enemy attack.

The 429th Squadron was the only Squadron not to lose an aircraft, probably because it led the Group. The 20th Squadron lost two planes, the 49th lost all seven of its aircraft, and the 96th lost five. Due to the fierce and continuous attacks, it is not known where all the losses occurred.

Plane #42-37970, 20th Squadron, had its vertical stabilizer shot off as the formation was turning on the I.P., dropped its bombs and was on fire. Seven chutes were seen.

Plane #42-31425, 20th Squadron, pulled out of the formation just after bombs away. Three men jumped and their chutes opened. The plane continued on, evidently on AFCE, for 22 minutes and crashed into the mountains 10 miles south of Klagenfurt, Austria. No other chutes were seen.

The exact time and place where six of the planes from the 49th Squadron went down were not known. They were #42-31859, #42-31419, #42-31873, #41-24618, #42-29638, and #42-31870. From interrogation and careful study of navigators' logs, this formation was in the most exposed position and attacked repeatedly. The E/A seemed to single out one after another until all were shot down. The seventh plane, #41-24571, was badly shot up, particularly in the tail, No. 3 engine was feathered, the right wing on fire. It pulled out to the left and was never seen again.

Plane #42-31390, 96th Squadron, was in the formation until six or seven minutes before bombs away. It burst into flames between No. 3 and No. 4 engines, pulled off to the right, went into a dive. Three to four chutes were seen.

Plane #42-31666, 96th Squadron, was seen to be in trouble five minutes before bombs away. Both wings were on fire near the fuselage. It left the formation, went up about 100 feet, then into a steep dive. Two or possibly three men were seen to bail out.

Plane #42-31459, 96th Squadron, was on the bomb run when it left the formation with No. 2 engine on fire. Men started to bail out and as many as seven chutes were seen to open. It continued on course for about eight minutes, then crashed into the mountains.

Plane #42-31640, 96th Squadron, had the right wing on fire just before bombs away. The landing gear was dropped, nosed up, then went into a vertical dive. It appeared to blow up about 1,000 feet above the ground. Four parachutes were seen to leave the plane.

Plane #42-29639, 96th Squadron, was attacked by a fighter while on the bomb run. No. 2 engine caught fire, peeled off to the left, nosed up slightly and went down. Three to four men were reported to leave the plane.

The wounded were: T/Sgt. Joe B. Null, UT, 20th Squadron, wounds on right leg; T/Sgt. William E. Davis, RO, 20th Squadron, wounds to right leg and thigh; S/Sgt. Howard H. Armstrong, TG, 20th Squadron, compound fracture of upper arm; Sgt. Russell Evanson, LW, 20th Squadron, wound to right knee, possible fracture; T/Sgt. Julius H. Bridges, RO, 96th Squadron, wounds to right thigh and left knee; T/Sgt. Turner W. Pickrel, Jr., UT, 96th Squadron, lacerations to right cheek from shattered plexiglass; T/Sgt. Edward Hart, UT, 429th Squadron, wound on left leg; S/Sgt. John Coffey, LT, 20th Squadron, severe wounds near right eye and penetrating wound in left eye resulting in loss of left eye through surgical operation; and S/Sgt. Julius Karp, RW, 20th Squadron, wounds to left leg and thigh.

Fortress gunners claimed the following enemy aircraft: Each credited with the destruction of a Me-109 were: Sgt. William W. Howard, LT; Sgt. Marion J. Maddox, TG; S/Sgt. Dwight E. Heatwole, LT, 20th Squadron; S/Sgt. Kenneth C. Cook, RW and S/Sgt. Michael A. Croccia, LW, 96th Squadron. Each credited with the destruction of a FW-190 were: Clair I. Carl, TG, 20th Squadron; T/Sgt. Robert D. Centers, RO, 96th Squadron, and S/Sgt. Nicholas A. Cannata, RW, 429th Squadron. Credited with the destruction of a Ju-88 was S/Sgt. Anthony R. Mancuso, TG, 429th Squadron. Each credited with the probable destruction of a Me-109 were: Sgt. Horace B. Maddux, TG, 20th Squadron; T/Sgt. Raymond C. Bringolf, UT, S/Sgt. Robert R. Cary, TG, S/Sgt. Henry (NMI) Macias, LW, 96th Squadron. Each credited with the probable destruction of a FW-190 were: 2nd Lt. Harry S. LaSalle, N, and S/Sgt. Thomas M. Moriarity, LT, 96th Squadron. Credited with the probable destruction of a Ju-88 was S/Sgt. Cantello H. Strickland, RW, 20th Squadron. Credited with the damage to a Me-109 was S/Sgt. Edmond C. Conway, LT, 96th Squadron, and for the damage to a FW-190 was 2nd Lt. Phillip L. Cooper, N, 429th Squadron.

Strike photos showed direct hits and near misses on the Component Parts Plant, the Machine and Assembly Building, the Foundry Building; direct hits on the Arms Shop Building, the small Arms Building, the Power House and northwest section of the Automatic Machine Shop Building and other buildings in that area probably damaged by direct hits or near misses.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-37970 - 20TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Paul A. Foust, 0-745880, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. John M. Coppinger, 0-680367, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Reginald W. Kurtz, 0-790257, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Kendall E. Mork, 0-669417, B.	(POW)
S/Sgt. John C. Clark, 33279680, U/T.	(POW) *
Sgt. Silvio L. Riccio, 11118028, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Darial G. Hammond, 35444973, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Chester A. Harvey, 35405177, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Otha G. Beene, 18165821, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Cornelius J. O'Leary, 31157535, R/O.	(POW)

* Died during forced march in Germany, 1945.

Statement of 2nd Lt. John M. Coppinger, CP, after liberation: "I bailed out as did Lts. Mork and Kurtz, and Sgts. Harvey, Riccio, Hammond, Beene, Clark, and O'Leary. I don't know about Lt. Foust. He was preparing to follow me. He said, "I'll be right with you." I don't know if he was wounded but did not seem to be. The navigator, Lt. Kurtz, said to me on the ground that parts of the plane fell around him as he dropped to the ground in his chute. He had the impression that the ship had blown up before Lt. Foust could bail out. My supposition is that he died in the explosion of the ship.

"S/Sgt. John C. Clark was able to bail out and was injured in the left shoulder. He said to me, "I'll see you on the ground, John." I was told that he was a prisoner in Stalag Luft IV and died of malnutrition and pneumonia during a forced march in Germany in the winter of 1944/45. This source was a Sgt. Henry."

Sgt. Silvio Riccio, Ball Turret Gunner. October 20, 1990: "I had enlisted November 24, 1943, took basic training in Miami, Florida. Went to Traux Field, Madison, Wisconsin for radio operator training and then to gunnery training at Kingman, Arizona. I landed up at Moses Lake and then Walla Walla, Washington. When they needed ball turret gunners, I applied for that. Forgot my radio operator training.

"At Walla Walla I was assigned to a crew as a ball turret gunner and assistant radio operator. Our pilot was Lt. Paul Foust; co-pilot, Lt. Coppinger; navigator, Lt. Stetner; bombardier, Lt. Mork; engineer, S/Sgt. John Clark; radio, S/Sgt. Cornelius O'Leary; ball turret, myself; waist gunners, S/Sgt. Chester Harvey and S/Sgt. Darial Hammond; and the other gunner was Sgt. Otha Beene.

"We went overseas on a Liberty Ship in November, 1943, landing in North Africa and then flew to Italy by C-47. We were assigned to the 20th Squadron. We guarded B-17s for awhile and then started flying.

"Some of our missions were to Reggio Emilia A/C Factory and Marshalling Yards, Ciampino/Rome Airdrome, Northern Italy and Anzio. We came in low there and got a lot of flak. We lost our Operations Officer and Squadron Leader on plane #422. We picked up 125 holes in our plane and flak in one of our engines. No injuries. Bombed the Monte Cassino Monastery, Athens, Budapest, Regensburg, and the sub pens at Toulon, France. We were the only Group to hit the sub pens. We had plenty of opposition and that was the first time I saw a German fighter ram a B-17. They both exploded.

I was told they were Goering's Yellow Nose Boys. We were 50 feet over the water coming out. We were running low on gas and had to land on the Island of Corsica. We stayed overnight and came home the next morning in a heavy fog. In those days, I didn't know what our losses were. Too busy watching our own butts! Our Group leader almost got it that day (Major Bradford Evans, 96th CO). He lost an engine on landing and almost got it in landing on the island, which was a fighter base. It was too small for B-17s to be landing on. We sweated out the landing back at our base because it was so foggy. We hit the Monastery at Cassino and Major Evans flew lead that day also.

"On February 24, 1944, we went to Steyr, Austria. We were told our fighter cover would be five minutes before the target. This was to be my 21st mission. We were to have B-24s behind us but we never saw them. As we went inland, the Germans hit us with everything they had and with no let up. I saw the 96th Squadron go down and then it was our turn. They came in, wave after wave, three to five fighters at a time. They were good pilots! They came at us from around the clock. You could have hit them with a rock, they were that close! They knew we were burning, I saw their 20mms flashing. There were Me-109s, FW-190s, and Me-110s, and I know they were throwing everything they had, and more. I was firing short bursts. I had a Me-110 in my ball turret sights and I saw a red flash. It looked like an explosion, then smoke and it dived. I didn't have time to follow it down because there were others. I saw another one smoking and going down. It must have been Beene firing from the tail. The plane was vibrating from everyone firing. Our intercom was out and as I got out of the ball turret it took a hit. As I got out to grab my chute, a 20mm made a hole in front of my face. I snapped my chute on and saw Harvey and Hammond trying to kick the escape hatch open. They couldn't get it open so I bailed out the waist hatch window. I went out after them. I saw the engine was on fire and the tail of the plane was in shreds. It seemed only seconds. The wind blew me away from the plane and I was saying, "Give it time," over and over and my chute never opened. So I grabbed the pilot chute and pulled on it and it finally opened. We went out at about 22,000 feet with the bomb bay doors open.

"I landed in deep snow. I saw the enemy coming with guns and pitchforks, so I lit a cigarette and waited. We were taken by the Gestapo, with other flyers, to Dulag Luft, Frankfurt, Germany. No fun! We were then taken to Stalag Luft VI in East Prussia. Me and nine other guys dug an escape tunnel, a good one, but it was discovered around D-Day, so we quit.

"I have talked to Bob Peterson recently and our stories of life, just prior to, during, and after being at Stalag Luft IV, are so similar there isn't much sense repeating it. It was a tough old War!"

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31425 - 20TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Donald L. Smith, 0-742534, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Frank J. Sims, 0-689382, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Joseph (NMI) Dendor, 0-811582, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. William (NMI) McConnell, 0-688549, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Gilbert J. Hepp, 32497623, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Charles S. Danforth, 35579414, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Bert F. Gaines, 13118959, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. William A. Lewis, 14051560, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Harold W. Garlick, 12136611, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Walter (NMI) Banasiewski, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Joseph Dendor, N, after liberation: "We left the formation about 30 miles south of Steyr, Austria. I met all the crew members, except S/Sgt. Harold Garlick, at Frankfurt, Germany where I was hospitalized for two weeks.

"Conditions were hard to land in the mountains. It is hard for me to remember every detail. The last I heard from S/Sgt. Garlick was when he was calling out enemy fighters, just before the warning bell to bail out. I have no knowledge of his bailing out. The last I knew he was in the tail of the plane. He probably was hit by shells from an enemy fighter at the very last moment, or he was seriously injured in the mountains and could not get down. I landed in the mountains, was seriously injured, and it took me over four hours to get down.

"The enlisted men who flew with me that day were not our regular crew members, as they were assigned guard duty that day."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-3189 - "LUCY" - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	George J. Verbruggen, 0-799511, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Richard W. Bartell, 0-746274, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Jesse S. Hizenski, 0-811681, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Robert M. Tiffany, 0-746918, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Benedict R. Tieniber, 32439369, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Earl W. Hunt, 15336841, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Paul J. Yanushis, 33356696, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Joe J. Casano, 18137900, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Arthur E. Jobin, 11040589, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Tomas E. Gmitter, 13089393, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of T/Sgt. Benedict R. Tieniber, Engineer, after liberation: "Our plane was crippled, we were out of formation and had wounded aboard. We bailed out near Wels, Austria and I believe our plane crashed near there.

"In a Luftwaffe camp I saw S/Sgt. Jobin with a hand in bandages. S/Sgt. Casano had a leg bandaged and his back was injured, as mine was. Both Casano and Jobin were wounded by enemy fighters. I also saw Lt. Verbruggen and Lt. Bartell. I met the others at another camp in Germany.

"T/Sgt. Gmitter bailed out at about the same time as the rest of the crew. I saw him at a German distribution center and then at Stalag Luft VI. We were together at VI but were separated at Stalag Luft IV and the long march before being repatriated."

T/Sgt. Tomas Gmitter, Radio Operator. November 19, 1990: "This particular day could be elaborated in more detail, but I cannot see that it would serve any purpose. What more can I say when it was a day of extremes. The attack, the bailout, the 31,000 feet descent by parachute, the capture and anxiety over an unknown future as a prisoner. This day took its toll on me and I suffer from it to this day.

"On February 22, 1944, when the mission to Steyr, Austria (Olching, Germany) was completed, we were advised by the camp physician that we were to be grounded for 72 hours due to exhaustion and strain. I had flown 31 missions by this time, all since the 15th of December, 19 of which were in January.

"On February 24, 1944, earlier than normal, we were awakened for a briefing. Without hesitation, I attended the briefing with the officers, which was customary. Prior to the normal briefing procedure, an officer announced that we were going to Steyr to complete the destruction of an aircraft factory and informed us that no one had returned from the previous Group that attacked the target on February 23rd, and it was likely the same fate be-fall our mission. He further stated that if anyone wanted to leave the room before the briefing, he could feel free to do so without recriminations. No one left the room.

"When the briefing was completed, we made the usual trip to our plane, by truck, but the usual banter was totally absent. The mission proceeded and as we approached the Alps from the south, approximately 200 enemy aircraft formed a straight line behind us - 'The Luftwaffe's Last Stand.' As we crossed the Alps, the enemy systemically peeled off in groups of seven and attacked the last plane in the Group. As this plane was crippled, another group of fighters would finish off the attack on this plane. The former group of fighters proceeded to the next plane. Seeing this we were advised to hold our fire until we were personally attacked. I was in the wing position of the lead plane in our element and observed the attack on all the bombers beside and behind our plane. Before the time for the attack on my aircraft, I had linked my supply of ammunition together with the intent of firing in long bursts. The enemy attacked each plane from the rear, behind the horizontal stabilizer of the tail section. Seeing this, I cut through both stabilizers and managed to destroy two fighters before I bailed out.

"I was strafed twice on the way down and managed to slip my chute to land in a cluster of tall pines. My parachute became entangled in the pines and my feet never hit the ground. After regaining my composure, I mustered enough strength to release my parachute harness and slipped into the snow, minus my shoes, which I lost on the way down. Upon leaving the area, I was observed by a local citizen who directed me to enter a cave-like structure and opening on the other side of the hill, which was a peat mine. I followed him to the other side of the mine and was faced with dozens of people, some members of my Group and members of the local armed forces. We were ordered not to speak to each other and to undress completely as they searched for weapons. We were outdoors and it was extremely cold. I was wearing several pairs of trousers, my blue heated suit, which did not work, and with the removal of each garment, the comment was made that I was not a very big man. Seeing that I carried no weapons they tore from around my neck the chain with the St. Christopher medal and ordered me to dress. We were standing on a road that must have been used to remove the peat from the mine. We were ordered to raise our hands and were walked to the center of the town of Ootnang, Austria. We were taken to what seemed to be a local community center, separated from each other and ordered not to speak to each other. We were individually asked where we came from and our single answer was, the United States. This obviously was not the answer they wanted. We were fed a serving of crepes suzettes with strawberry jam and powdered sugar, hot tea laced with Schnaps and I thought, "Man this is going to be great!" Needless to say, that was the last decent meal I was going to see until I was released from prison camp on April 29, 1945.

"We were taken from Ootnang by 40 & 8 to Frankfurt, Germany for interrogation. After a few days, we were shipped again by 40 & 8 to Kiefheide in East Prussia. From there we were shipped, again by rail, to Hydekrug and from there we were shipped by rail, and coal freighter on the Baltic, to Stettin. From Stettin to a vermin infested camp at Nurnburg. This camp was ordered closed by the Red Cross because it was within yards of the Marshalling Yards and it truly was infested with lice, bedbugs, fleas, etc. Nevertheless, we were confined here until force marched to Moosdorf, Austria, where we were liberated by Patton's forces on April 29, 1945. Exact dates and Stalag Luft numbers escape me after this long period of time."

1st Lt. George J. Verbruggen, Pilot of A/C #42-31859. March 10, 1990: "February 24, 1944 started as a routine operational day. It was to be my 42nd combat mission. The target, if I remember correctly, was Steyr, Austria. We were briefed that there would be 110 to 125 enemy fighters in the area. My position in the flight was deputy in the 49th Squadron.

"We took off and formed over the field near Foggia, Italy. As we formed up, I noticed that gas was siphoning out of one tank on the right wing. I knew that if it did not stop, I would not have enough fuel to get back. So, I left the formation and returned to the field and landed. I sent the engineer to

check the problem. When he returned, he said the gas cap was not properly seated. We took off again and joined the Squadron.

"The attack on the Squadron started around noon. Being the low Squadron of the Group, the enemy concentrated their attack on us. Their tactics were to hit and clean out the lowest Squadron, as the least amount of fire power could be directed on them. For awhile we seemed to be holding our own, but as we turned to the Initial Point, the enemy got more aggressive. At that point, all hell broke loose! The aircraft was getting more hits; by the voices of the gunners I could tell that the tension was very high. This was hell week and both sides knew it!

"About halfway between the Initial Point and the target, my leader started dropping back. I assumed he was hit and losing power. As I watched him drop down, I looked back and saw that all the aircraft in our Squadron had disappeared. About this time, the outboard engine on the right side was hit and the co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Richard Bartell, feathered the engine. I ordered the bombardier, 2nd Lt. Robert Tiffany, to salvo the bombs, as I increased power in the remaining engines in order to catch the First Squadron of the Second Wave.

"I had no sooner applied power when I lost rudder control, and almost simultaneously, lost the elevator. As soon as I realized I no longer could control the aircraft, I hit the bail-out switch and signaled the co-pilot to leave. I stayed with the aircraft until I made sure that all the crew had bailed out. I left the aircraft through the bomb bay.

"I got a terrific jolt when I pulled the ripcord. It took me almost 20 minutes to come down, however, it seemed like much longer. At about 2,000 feet a small trainer aircraft began circling me. At first I thought he was going to fire at me, but he turned and left as soon as I got close to the ground.

"The Landwache (Landwatch) were waiting for me. I no sooner landed, when they ran up to me, took off my parachute and gave it to a woman that was near to them. She took it and ran to the village nearby. They then took me to the village at the point of a rifle, which was held by a soldier who was on leave. There were plenty of on-lookers and whenever they met, they raised their right arm and said, 'Heil Hitler.'

"I should have been elated to know that I was on the ground without injury, however, I was depressed with the feeling that I should have gone down with the aircraft instead of being captured. I wasn't on the ground very long when my body told me that my left testicle was giving me pain. I said nothing to my captors about it. I must have adjusted the strap so that it was directly over the testicle. The adrenalin must have been flowing profusely as I did not feel the pain until on the ground.

"All of the crew got out safely, although I did not know if any of them were injured at the time. I learned this from Ben Tieniber, my engineer on the crew. All of my crew were captured. I do not know what camp they were sent to.

"After going through the interrogation center near Frankfurt-Am-Main, I was sent to Stalag Luft I near Barth, Germany. I was assigned to North Lager One. I do not have any recollection of any other 2nd Bomb Group personnel in the camp other than Bartell, my co-pilot; Tiffany, the bombardier; and Hizinski, the navigator.

"I did escape from Stalag Luft I, but was recaptured three days later. As far as I know, I was the only idiot that thought he could out-fox the Germans. After spending four days in the Stettin City jail and eight days on hard rations, "Bread and Water," back at prison camp, I learned that in order to escape in a country where one is incarcerated, one needs to know the language and have outside help.

"I was repatriated by the Russians who over-ran our camp on the 1st of May 1945."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31419 - 49TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. John P. Vandy, 0-677616, P. (KIA)

2nd Lt. Wilbert F. Schwerin, 0-691159, CP. (KIA)

2nd Lt.	Benjamin A. Clemens, 0-811562, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Loren (NMI) White, 0-751692, B.	(POW)
Sgt.	David H. L. Goldstraw, 33373432, U/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Thomas P. Isbell, 14163560, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Joseph (NMI) Rolek, 37306356, R/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	John J. O'Donnell, 32182033, L/W.	(POW)
Sgt.	John J. R. Kenlein, 32605556, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Henry J. Klinkoski, 35889559, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Loren White, B, after liberation: "All of the crew bailed out with the exception of two. I went out through the forward escape hatch with Lt. Clemens. John Vandy and Wilbert Schwerin did not get out. Schwerin was wounded and I don't know about Vandy. I saw Vandy last in the vicinity of the pilot's compartment. I saw Schwerin on the catwalk, under the pilot's compartment, just before we went out of control. When the plane turned over, I was thrown forward and that was the last I saw of him.

"I saw all the other members of the crew in care of soldiers. This was the night of the 24th. The radio gunner, T/Sgt. Klinkoski, was wounded in the leg."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31873 - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Joseph J. Pausa, 0-797594, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Victor (NMI) Marturano, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Gerald H. Voska, 0-747112, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Charles P. Olsen, 0-73928, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Paul H. Behm, 15331473, U/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Phil W. Ashook, 39272985, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Ernest A. Henderson, 11097749, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	John D. Martin, 34168113, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	John W. Dunlop, 12157993, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Earl J. Wilkens, 39104948, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of S/Sgt. John W. Dunlop, TG, after liberation: "I bailed out over the Alps from about 21,000 feet. We all bailed out in regular order, from tail to nose. When my chute opened I looked at my watch, which read 12:45. I counted the remaining chutes blossom and we saw each other at Salzburg. The aircraft blew up when it hit the ground. No one was seriously injured.

"Lts. Pausa, Marturano and Voska left Frankfurt, March 1, 1944 for a camp near Barth, Germany. Sgts. Behm, Wilkins, Henderson, Martin, Ashook and myself left Frankfurt on March 1, 1944 for Stalag Luft IV near Memal, Germany, and we arrived there March 5th.

"I last talked to Lt. Olsen about one hour after capture. He had no serious injuries to my knowledge. One of the crew said they saw him in Munich and then heard from him in Frankfurt, at Luftwaffe headquarters, waiting to be shipped to prison camp, February 28, 1944."

2nd Lt. Victor Marturano, co-pilot of A/C #42-31873, February 2, 1990: "February 24, 1944 was my 24th mission. We were awakened at 4:00 a.m. and briefed at 5:00 a.m., which was an indication that we would probably be going deep into Germany.

"On the ride to the flight line Joe asked me if I wanted to fly the left seat to build First Pilot hours, which I did. The mission started out rough. The 49th Squadron was the last Squadron in the attacking force, the most vulnerable in an attack. Our airplane was 'Tail End Charlie.' As I jockeyed

for position in the formation, I had to fall away to keep from stalling. The last plane was flying too slow in his climbing turn out over the Adriatic where we always assembled and climbed to altitude to avoid flying over German lines.

"As we crossed the Italian coast, in the area of Udine, we were intercepted by enemy fighters. Our Squadron, being on the tail end, became targets to the 'Storm Fighter Units,' FW-190s equipped with 4-centimeter cannons and 3 MK 108 cannons, and well armored plated. They attacked from the rear, flying four abreast, firing their cannons, staying out of range of our 50 cal. guns, then rolling over and split S-ing, exposing their armored underside. We took a hit in No. three engine, which started burning. Joe activated the extinguisher and feathered the engine. Minus one engine we were unable to keep up and became a sitting duck. We jettisoned our bombs. As we jettisoned, a shell exploded near the cockpit, fortunately, Joe and I were wearing flak vests. I took a small piece of shrapnel in the left thigh. I activated the auto pilot, sounded the alarm to abandon ship and gave a verbal command to bail out.

"In a matter of minutes the fighters broke off to attack somewhere else. Apparently, seeing the first chutes come out, they had made their kill and there was more work to be done. As I snapped on my chest pack, I thought I had better check to see if everyone got out. With a portable oxygen bottle I walked back through the bomb bay to the waist. The ball gunner was still in the turret. I picked up the crank, which was used to move the turret when there was no power and pounded on the turret to get the gunner's attention. The gunner responded by opening the turret hatch. I told him to bail out. As he stepped out of the turret into the waist, a lone FW-190 pulled abreast of our left wing, maybe wanting to get a closer look at the B-17 before it got out of the sky. He hadn't been fired on as he approached, he must have felt he was safe, we had either bailed out or were dead. Upon seeing the FW-190, the gunner (Sgt. Phil Ashook), swung the left waist gun and fired into the 190, shattering the canopy and killing the pilot. The 190 fell off on its left wing and went into a spin. The gunner snapped on his chest pack and left via the waist door.

"It was decision time for me. Frankly I didn't want to bail out. I went forward to the pilot's compartment with a gnawing feeling in my gut. An inner voice was telling me to get out. The No. three engine was smoldering and the windshields were gone; there were holes in the wings and it was a wonder the plane was still flying. I could see a lake in the distance at about 11:00 o'clock. I had the wishful thought that it was Lake Constance. With reluctance, I dropped into the nose section, dangled my feet out of the open hatch, looked down and saw nothing but snow covered peaks. With a prayer, I gave a shove and dropped clear.

"I landed in snow waist deep on a mountain side. I slipped out of my chute and slide down to the timber line. It was cold! All I had on was my uniform shirt and trousers with an electrical suit over my uniform. Without an electrical outlet to plug into there was no warmth. I was somewhere down in the Austrian Alps, friendly territory was Italy to the south and Switzerland to the west, both a long way. While coming down in my chute I hadn't noticed a town nearby so I was somewhere near nowhere. I worked my way down the mountain side into a valley. Upon reaching the valley floor I found a single track rail line running approximately north to south. What luck, 'The Iron Compass.' In the early days of flying, pilots often referred to railroads as an iron compass. I was walking in a southerly direction, just off the track bed with hopes that I might be picked up by some Partisans and with thoughts of how I might manage the cold night.

"My left thigh had commenced throbbing where I had taken a piece of shrapnel. I hadn't traveled more than half a mile when I heard a rifle shot and the whine of a bullet, someone hollered, 'Hello.' I stopped and help up my hands hoping it was friendly Partisans. Four elderly men approached me. Three had rifles and one had a pistol. The man with the pistol held it on me while he felt my body for weapons. The other three rifles were leveled at me. I had left my 45 in its holster draped over the back of my seat.

knew they had gotten out because I had walked through the plane before bailing out. While waiting to board the train, we were surrounded by German civilians muttering what I imagine were obscenities. Then I heard a voice in perfect English, 'Hang the bastards.' It was an unhealthy feeling and it became apparent German civilians were definitely a threat to our reaching a prison camp. Just as we were boarding the train, a man kicked me in the seat of the pants. This infuriated the guard close by and he threatened the man with a rifle butt.

"Aboard the train, five prisoners and a guard were locked in a compartment. That night as we rolled toward our destination, the young guard in our compartment fell asleep. A prisoner by the name of Powers, gently took the guard's rifle and placed it in an overhead baggage rack and then woke him up and told him his Lt. had come along, found him asleep, taken his rifle and said he would be shot when we arrived at our destination. The poor kid was scared to death. After letting him sweat awhile, we told him where his rifle was and we all had a good laugh. He was a good Joe and spoke fluent English.

"We arrived in Frankfurt the next morning. The station was gutted from bombing attacks. We were warned to keep a low profile; the citizens of Frankfurt had no love for Allied airmen. We were trucked to the interrogation center where we were allowed to take a shower and given Red Cross parcels containing cigarettes, tooth brush and paste, shaving equipment, underwear, and other valuables. The officers and enlisted men were then separated. I did see Jack Dunlop and John Martin after the war, but never saw the other four enlisted men who were aboard when we were shot down and were in the same camp with Jack and John.

"That night air raid sirens sounded and we were moved from our cells to shelters. The bombs fell and the earth shook. It was far more frightening and lasted much longer than the raid we experienced in Salzburg.

"About 10:00 the next morning, I was escorted to a room where I was interrogated by a German Major. The Major preceded each question with the word, 'perhaps.' Such as, 'Lt., perhaps you were on the way to bomb the ball bearing plant (I don't recall the name of the town)?' My reply was, 'perhaps.' After a number of perhaps answers, he became angry and threatened to have me shot. Thereafter, my replies to his questions were, my name, rank and serial number. The questions lasted about 20 minutes and I was returned to my cell where I remained until the next day. During the brief stay in Frankfurt, all I can recall getting to eat was black coffee and bread.

"About noon the following day we were loaded onto trucks and driven through the smoldering ruins of Frankfurt to a railroad siding. After a wait of several hours, a train backed onto the siding with a number of box cars. As we were loading, one of the prisoners, kidding a guard, said, 'In the United States, German prisoners get pullman accommodations.' The guard's reply, in his guttural accent was, 'We didn't invite you here.'

"The box car had straw on the floor. Once aboard, our belts and shoes were taken from us to discourage any thought of escaping. We were en route for two days, during which time the train stopped a number of times. Either for air raids or to pull off on a siding to let other trains go by. Food was scarce. In the afternoon of the second day, we arrived at the town of Barth, located on a small peninsula on the Baltic Sea, approximately 60 miles south of Sweden. After sorting through the piles of shoes and belts thrown into the box car, we disembarked. We were met by a contingent of guards and guard dogs, which marched us to the northwest outskirts of Barth, to Stalag Luft I, an American Airman Officer's Camp.

"After entering the enclosed barbed wire compound we were lined up in front of some empty barracks and greeted by the camp commander, who filled us in on camp rules and consequences of any misbehavior or escape attempts. We were then assigned to barracks, called blocks, and rooms. We were issued nine bed slats on which to place a straw filled mattress. There were two roll calls a day, head

counts, lining up five deep in front of each block and bed slates were counted regularly for wood could be put to several uses by ingenious prisoners intent on escape.

"I was fortunate. I was assigned to one of the two, four-man rooms in the barracks. The other rooms were much larger and housed 12 prisoners. Our room measured 8' x 12' and consisted of two bunk beds, a table, two chairs, a stove and a window looking west.

"Since food was in short supply in Germany, we did not fare too well nutritionally. The Germans supplied us with limited amounts of potatoes, barley, rutabagas, and dark bread made with potato flour; occasionally coffee from ground up roasted acorns, tea made from rose petals and leaves. On two occasions we received horse meat and flat beer. The horses having been killed nearby in strafing attacks and beer from a bombed brewery. Added to what the Germans furnished were the contents of Red Cross parcels that arrived intermittently. The Red Cross parcels contained KLIM (powdered milk in cans), margarine, spam or corned beef, chocolate D-bars, raisins or dried prunes, a small box of sugar cubes, and occasionally a can of condensed milk. When we first arrived the food was pooled and prepared in a central mess hall until it was burned. After that we prepared our own food in our rooms using utensils made from KLIM cans.

"In each barracks there was a latrine and a shower room, but no hot water. In the winter time we would heat water on our stoves and take sponge baths in the shower where there was a concrete floor. It was cold and we didn't linger.

"After being in the camp for about a week, I was summoned to the camp administration building where I was cordially greeted by a German Captain. After a brief interrogation, to which my replies were name, rank and serial number, the Captain broke into a laugh. 'Lieutenant,' he said, 'We know all about you. In fact I lived on the third floor of the house your father and mother are now living in at 119 Chestnut St., Montclair, N.J.' He paused, 'You don't believe me do you?' I shook my head, no. 'All right, your father's house is located two houses up from Midland Ave. Looking at your father's house from the street, the Hamiltons live on the left and the Blooms live on the right and the Ruggers directly across the street. Lt., I lived in Montclair from 1936-1939 while working at the Dover Arsenal in Dover, New Jersey.' I was astounded while he proceeded to tell me all about myself. When I graduated and where I entered the service, the schools I attended, etc. When he finished, he shook my hand and said we would get together and have a drink in the near future. I never saw him again. I am sure most of the information was gathered from newspaper clippings, but he did know Montclair, the house at 119 Chestnut Street and the neighbors.

"To keep ourselves occupied, besides plotting escapes, there were organized bridge and chess tournament, games, boxing matches, and other self-implemented entertainment. Before the mess hall burned, several plays were put on. 'Hit the Bottle' was one I tried out for, a minor part, but didn't succeed. We were able to keep up with the progress of the war by radio. Where the radio was hidden or where it was obtained is unknown to me. I believe it was made from parts obtained from guards for American cigarettes. The radio was tuned to BBC (British Broadcasting Co.). The news was then disseminated and passed on to each barracks via the written word. The German guards searched the barracks frequently for the radio but never succeeded in finding it.

"Whenever new prisoners arrived, after lock up each night, (barring the doors and closing the window shutters) 'The Ferrets,' as we called them, (German personnel who understood English) would crawl underneath the barracks to listen to conversations, hoping to gain information from the questions and answers exchanged between the old and new prisoners on tactics, modifications on aircraft, guns, etc. They were called ferrets because crawl spaces underneath the barracks was practically non-existent so they would literally have to furrow their way in. Being aware of this, anything of classified nature was discussed outside the barracks, usually while walking around the compound. The conversations that

took place in the rooms when we expected them of eavesdropping were loud, boisterous and exaggerated.

"Prisoners were always planning escapes. Tunnels were being dug almost constantly from barracks nearest the fences. The dirt taken from the tunnels was disposed of in various ways. We flushed it down the toilets little by little or put it into our pants pockets and let it sift through holes while walking around the compound. In one operation it was stored between ceiling and rafters and the ceiling eventually gave in.

"The nearest thing to a mass escape took place in July, 1944. We had been digging a tunnel on the eastern side of the compound for about a month. It was to break out into a barley field between the camp and the town of Barth. On the night of the escape, three of us who were going, exchanged places with men living in the barracks from which the tunnel had been dug. The tunnel was complete except for a few feet it would take to break the surface in the barley field. The break was scheduled for 11:00 p.m.

"A few minutes before 11:00 the air raid sirens sounded. This was great, it gave us a better chance of getting away undetected. The word came back, 'surface broken.' In a matter of minutes one of the men backed out and said the Germans were waiting for us. When the first man came out, flood lights came on and the order to halt was given. We were fortunate that they didn't open fire.

"In a matter of minutes Germans came rushing into the barracks. I was standing in the hall when they entered and was told to stay put. They brought everyone out of the room from where the tunnel originated and started questioning us. It was a long night! When they found out I was not in the assigned barracks I, along with 17 others, was taken to the 'Cooler' (military confinement) where we remained for a week.

"Sometime in March, 1945, a prisoner was shot by a prison guard. The prisoner had inadvertently walked out of the barracks during an air raid alert. It was a senseless shooting.

"During April, 1945, things in Germany were rapidly deteriorating. The Allies were advancing on both fronts. Late in the afternoon of April 29th, the senior British and American officers were called to a conference with the German Kommander. They were told that orders had come to move the whole camp westward. The senior American officer stated that he was not willing to move at all and asked, in that case, what the German attitude would be. The German officer replied that he would not tolerate bloodshed in the camp. If we did not intend to move, he and his men would evacuate themselves and leave us.

"The following morning, April 30th, we fell out for the usual head count. It was reported that the German Major in charge of the North Compound, walked to the senior American officer and handed him his pistol, stating he was the Colonel's prisoner. The Colonel accepted the pistol and reportedly told the Major to get into civilian clothes and get the hell out before the Russians arrived. With that, the German personnel started leaving with their families. The military started blowing up installations at the nearby flak school along with supply dumps and radio installations.

"It was learned that the Red Cross parcels which we hadn't been receiving for over a month were stored in the flak school. A contingent of prisoners was assigned the task of bringing them into camp. When they arrived at the school they found civilians helping themselves to the parcels. The civilians were dispersed and the parcels brought into camp. Each prisoner was given three parcels. The next morning, May 1st, when we awakened, white flags replaced the German Swastika.

"About mid-afternoon, a Russian soldier and a woman, riding double on horseback, rode up to the closed gates of the prison camp. Through an interpreter he asked for the man in charge. The senior American officer was summoned. When the Colonel appeared, the Russian asked why the gates were still closed and why the wire fences were still standing. The Colonel tried to explain that it was for safety reasons. There were rumors of S.S. Troopers in the area. The Russian soldier, reportedly pointed his

automatic weapon at the Colonel and told him he was liberating the camp and wanted the fences torn down. With reluctance the Colonel gave the order. The soldier and his companion soon rode off and the tearing down of the fences ceased. Later, a Russian patrol arrived and informed us that Hitler was dead.

"The next day the Russians drove some cattle into camp so we could have some fresh meat. That afternoon a few of us ventured into the town of Barth. Red flags and white sheets were hanging from most of the buildings. We noticed that the few German males were either very old, crippled, lame, or blind. The shop windows were empty. The people of the town were standing on their steps, crying and in terror. The Russians were running wild, drinking, looting, etc. While standing on a corner we observed a Russian tank moving down the street and a young boy, about 12 years old, standing on the curb waving a German swastika. As the tank passed, he spit at it and the gunner of the tank swung his gun around and shot the boy. This was enough for us and we started back to camp.

"On the way back to camp, in the barley field west of camp, near the beach, we came upon the bodies of a man, two women, and a baby in a carriage. We believed it was murder, suicide, and we learned later that it was just that. The Burgomaster had taken his family of wife daughter and granddaughter on a picnic, shot them and then himself, rather than fall into Russian hands.

"On May 3rd, Marshall Rokosovsky, the Commander of the Russian Army arrived and had a discussion with Colonel Zemke. General Rokosovsky reportedly informed Colonel Zemke that he planned to march us to a rail-head, where we would entrain for a trip to Odessa on the Black Sea. From there we were to ship out for a return to American hands. We heard that Colonel Zemke got in touch with General Doolittle at SHEAF Headquarters in Paris and informed him as to what was going on.

"Reportedly, General Doolittle informed the Russian that these men were under his command and he would take them out. Whereupon Rokosovsky said this was now Russian territory and that he would dispose of us as he thought best. General Doolittle then replied that he was coming in to take us out and if forced to come in with bomb bays ready and guns loaded, that's how he would do it. It took several days to work out the details of the airlift.

"On May 12th we marched to the airport outside of Barth, carrying the few possessions we owned. Mine consisted mostly of cigarettes which I had won shooting craps and playing poker. On the way we passed a labor camp of French, Italian, Polish soldiers and civilians. They were free too. We shouted greetings in Kriege fragments of German, French, and Italian.

"We passed the concentration camp located on airport property. A few German prisoners, under Russian guard, were burning evil smelling rubbish.

"At the airport we boarded B-17s, 30 to a plane, taking positions in the bomb bay and flight deck. On the way to France we flew over the Ruhr Valley; the cities of Aachen, Cologne, Duren; cities leveled by Allied bombing attacks. Total devastations!

"After landing at Rheims, France we were put on stake body trucks. While waiting for the convoy to pull out and take us to Camp Lucky Strike, French civilians gathered around us wishing us well and asking for cigarettes. I reached in my box and started tossing packs of cigarettes into the crowd. There was a mad scramble for each pack and before the convoy pulled out I had disposed of all my cigarettes. I learned later that I could have sold them for as much as ten dollars a pack.

"That night at Camp Lucky Strike, I went to church services, got down on my knees and thanked God for looking after me and delivering me safely into Allied hands. We were given physicals, issued uniforms, partial pay of \$200.00 and put on diets to build up our system. One day a C-47 landed in a field and General Eisenhower emerged, greeting us and shaking hands as he moved through the crowd. As he shook my hand he asked, 'Lt. are you getting enough to eat?' I assured him that I was. On another occasion I was walking down a camp street and I came upon a crap game. I stopped and watched awhile. In time I was asked if I wanted in. I accepted and was handed the dice. My first bet

was \$100.00, half of my partial pay. My first roll was 'Snake Eyes,' crap. I put down my remaining \$100.00 and rolled 'Box cars,' crap again. I was broke and cured of shooting crap.

"In closing I'd like to say that life as a POW in Stalag Luft I was a picnic compared to what POWs held by the Japanese during World War II, and POWs of Korea and Vietnam, suffered in torture and humiliation during those wars."

2nd Lt. Gerald H. Voska, navigator on B-17 #42-31859. June 4, 1990: "I'm sure that I was on all missions mentioned through February 24, as I was anxious to complete my tour.

"As I remember, the February 24th mission was to have been 47 for me. Of all the missions I was on, number 47 was the most memorable. Joe Pausha was the Operations officer of the 49th Squadron and assigned the positions in the formation on each flight. He had assigned us the tail end position of the last flight, and the 2nd Bomb Group was the last Group position that day. This was not a very desirable place to be. As it turned out, it wouldn't have made any difference because half the Group went down that day and, as expected, we were the first to go.

"As I recall, we had almost reached our target altitude, and had crossed the Italian border into Austria, when we were intercepted by enemy fighters, and in greater numbers than we had ever had before. The attack came from the rear of the formation and our tail gunner, S/Sgt. John Dunlop, calling out the positions as they were coming in on us. Our tail gunner reported hitting one attacker and our lower turret gunner, Sgt. Phil Ashook, another. We were hit several times ourselves with one hit under my feet at the navigation table. At that point I realized that I had been hit in the left leg and bleeding through my electric suit.

"A few minutes later the formation pulled away from us, and the bail-out alarm sounded. At that point everything was automatic with no thought except to put on our parachutes and get out before the thing blows up. My parachute was adjusted too far down from my chest, and when it opened it nearly broke my back. When I looked up at my chute it was full of sizable holes at the peak and then I realized it had taken most of the hit that got me in the leg. There had been, at my feet, under the desk, a piece of sheet iron, my flak vest and chute.

"In floating down from 20,000 feet I only saw one other chute and began to wonder if bombardier Olsen and I had been too hasty. We were coming down in a little valley between two mountains that peaked several thousand feet above the valley floor. The ground below was covered with snow and number of evergreen trees. I came down between the trees and sank into the snow to my hips. My partner came down about 200 yards from me and was caught in a tree. Before I could reach him he had freed himself and was on the snow. It turned out that instead of Olsen it was the other chute carrying Ashook, the lower turret gunner.

"It was mid-afternoon and we decided that we would need to wait until after dark to travel, however, within 20 minutes there were several groups of rifle carrying men coming up. They motioned us to come down and, when we reached a road, we were joined by several other crewmen, thus accounting for everyone except Joe Pausha.

"We were taken to a schoolhouse in a small village, which must have been a lumber village. The villagers searched us and took us to a central room in the building and posted guards at the doors. As evening came we were given some soup and bread and wondered what was in store for us next. We also wondered what had happened to Joe and speculated that probably he had come out after us and was farther down the valley.

"After dark an army truck arrived and we were taken down the mountain to a camp where there were several injured American prisoners. A British medic examined, cleaned and bandaged my wound. We were given a place to sleep.

"The next morning we were taken to a train station, put on a train headed for Salzburg, Austria, picking up more American POWs along the way. By the time we got to Salzburg, our nine had grown to about 30, including Joe Pausha. Thus our crew was all accounted for and we were in reasonably good condition.

"In Salzburg we were locked in the city jail for the night. The following morning, which would have been the 26th, we were given some bread and cheese and taken to the railroad station for transport to the next destination, which turned out to be Frankfurt-Am-Main. Although the distance from Salzburg to Frankfurt is not more than 200 miles, it took the whole day because the railroad system had been bombed in many places, requiring re-routing and changing trains. The number of guards increased to 10 or 12, not for fear of escaping, but to protect us from the populace who appeared to be extremely hostile. In one instance, when we were being herded down a stairway to board a train at a lower level, an irate middle-aged man attempted to jump the railing to get to our group. He was immediately struck with the butt end of a rifle and he tumbled to the bottom of the stairway. We, and our guards, walked on by leaving him where he had fallen.

"Frankfurt was a receiving and processing center for aviation prisoners. We were given a hot meal and allowed to shower, shave and get cleaned up. We were issued, by the Red Cross, a box containing toilet articles, socks, underwear, hand knitted sweater, in addition to a blue R.A.F. overcoat and sewing kit. We remained in Frankfurt for the rest of the day and got some much needed rest and regular food.

"On February 28th, we were sent on our way to what was to be our permanent camp, Stalag Luft I at Barth. For this journey we were put into box cars in which half the space was for us and the other half for the three to four guards. The floor was covered with straw and the space was tight with 25 men to one half of the 40 & 8 box car. I can't remember how many car loads of us there were. Our numbers kept increasing, and there were several. Frankfurt to Barth was more than 400 miles, and due to the condition of the railroad system, as I mentioned previously, the trip took three to four days. We were in complete darkness most of the time and were frequently shunted off into sidings for one reason or another. One of the reasons was that the rail yards were the targets for both the R.A.F. and our own bombers. When this happened, the guards locked us in the cars and took off for safe areas, leaving us in the dark. We finally made it to Barth about March 3rd.

"New prisoners arrived at Barth several times a week, and each group was met by those already there in the hope of finding someone they knew with news from home or of the Group they had been attached to. It was no different with our arrival and there were many reunions. There has been a great deal written, movies made, about Stalag life and what I have read, and seen, has been quite accurate. It was an experience that I would not want to go through again, but I'm glad I had it when I was young.

"There were so many stories of attempted escapes, tunnels dug, harassments and punishments that I could go on and on. With six to seven thousand Americans, in their 20s and plenty of time on their hands, there can't have been an idea that wasn't considered or acted upon. There was some activity going on in the camp that constantly caused concern, frustration, and uneasiness for our captors, and most of it contrived by the captives. I was always glad that I was one of us rather than one of them.

"Our camp was overrun by the Russians the first part of May, 1945. After about 10 days of negotiations, our planes were allowed to land at a nearby airfield and we were flown to France in stripped down B-17s.

"What our crew experienced was rather ordinary with some others that I have heard about. I kept in touch with Joe Pausha until his death in November, 1989. My contact with my old crew seemed a thing of the past until I received a phone call from Vic Marturano, our co-pilot, from North Carolina as a result of this research, and we are grateful for that. We had lost contact with one another for 45 years."

S/Sgt. John W. Dunlop, TG on A/C #42-31873, November 2, 1990: "Our truck ground toward the airfield as we digested the news of our briefing of the German installations located at Steyr, Austria. Somehow the briefing had cast a mood over us that seemed to pale to others by comparison, when we suddenly came to a halt with all of us piling out next to our ship. In the darkness, little if any, conversation passed on among us as we busied the final checks and inspection of our stations. There was some last minute shuffling of our crew make-up, as we were about to have a new ball turret gunner, Sgt. Phil Ashook, and bombardier, 2nd Lt. Charles Olsen, join us on this mission. The early morning was busy, yet seemed endless when at last our ship rolled down the airstrip to lift off and join the formation of the Group.

"We were informed that something in excess of a hundred bombers would be participating on this mission. The realization dawned on us that no matter what number of bombers might be involved was of a very small consequence as our bomber was the last ship in the last echelon of the last Group taking part in the entire mission. The colloquialism, 'TALE END CHARLIE' had a new real meaning to us.

"A steady drone of the engines and a sterile view of the patchy cloud formations was purely hypnotic. From the tail gun position, one got the distinct impression that there was an awful lot of nothing out there, when off to my left, at approximately 4:00 o'clock appeared a distant speck that more and more began to look like a twin engine Messerschmitt flying parallel to us. Apparently checking our heading, rate of climb, air speed and all other things that would be of interest to German pilots.

"It wasn't long before the enemy fighters appeared and checked us over a few times, then assembled into a stepped up attack formation and came at us from between 5:00 and 6:00 o'clock high. The attack formation was such that you could see only a single plane at a given time, although you damn well knew that another six or so fighters were stacked up behind the lead ship. Coming in from the sun was another distinct advantage for them as it tended to obscure our vision. The lead ship would cut loose at us then roll off to his left and downward to reassemble for another pass. In the instant the Messerschmitt you were shooting at rolled over, the pilot in the plane immediately behind simply had to lay down on his triggers and spew out everything he had at you. I was positive of at least two hits, but however, this was neither the time nor place to verify a coup. This could best be done by others behind you.

"We were showered by 20mm fire and rocket bursts that looked like old gutter pipes mashing through the air. There were a number of moments when our ship would feel as though it was haltingly making its way flying through a huge vat of bumpy mud. I could see and feel where our ship had taken a number of hits. Our bomber sure had a sickness with the end of our port side wing hit, the number three engine hit, our tail assembly hit as well as other unable to be seen. The sum of these things, in addition to alarm bells and trailing black smoke, sort of told me it was time to leave.

"I turned and latched my chest pack to my harness and crawled back into the waist area. The waist gunners, radio operator and I looked at each other like the entire scene was unreal. Someone thought it best to hang in there with the ship, however, this wasn't my cup of tea and I jerked the waist door release. It was quite a shock to find the handle in my hand with the door still in place. I welled with fear and anger and charged into the door with both the door and I out into the wild blue younder. It's a time like this when you start talking to yourself to make a decision that this would be a very poor time to pop the chute.

"Fall free and get out of this mess before pulling the ripcord. While falling I could see others bailing out and our plane veering away and down from the formation. It was very amazing to experience no true sense of falling! Nothing at all like I would have imagined a fall would feel. I estimate that the chute opened after approximately a 3,000-foot fall. It opened like a cannon had gone off and I felt a dull cramping feeling through my guts. After several tries, my feet managed to catch in the shroud lines

enabling some adjustments to be made providing a considerably greater degree of comfort. Coming down in the chute was very strange due to the absence of sound, which in itself seemed to create the sound of silence.

"While counting bail-outs from our ship, I noted that one of the late ones to jump seemed to be coming down at a greater rate than the others. I later learned that it was our navigator whose chute had taken a 20mm hit and filled it with holes. Down below there appeared to be nothing but snow, ice and more snow. I spotted a small hamlet ahead and kept a fix on it until I landed on the western slope of the Alps.

"Sitting in the snow, the first thing to come to mind was what my mother was going to say when she learned about this. It was cold and time to get down off the mountain. I slowly worked my way downward until I came upon some brush and scrub trees. A short rest was discouraged by the cold so I tossed away my 45 pistol, then took my knife, cut two sticks and a section of my chute and again worked my way downward, using the sticks as braking devices to slow or stop my descent as needed. During this progress, a snake-like disturbance was visible in the snow below. It turned out to be Germans, in snow garb, coming to hunt us down. Closer to the foot of the mountain I found the waist gunners, Sgts. Henderson and Martin, in good shape and we then concluded we had to keep moving or freeze. So we circled in a partial arc and cut the trail behind the Germans that were looking for us. It looked like they had come from the small hamlet so we continued to backtrack their trail. Night had come upon us and from our position at the edge of the hamlet, observed a farmhouse which seemed to have an elderly lady and younger women in the farmhouse. There wasn't much choice as whether to freeze or knock on the door. The younger woman answered and we tried to explain that we were Americans that had been shot down and would do no harm. Very fortunately the girl spoke good English. She and the elderly woman were a bit wary but exceptionally calm. Response to where the railroad tracks were located were answered by statements that you will freeze - 'For you the war is over.' Our question session came to an abrupt halt when the German snow troopers entered the house with their dogs and captured us. We were taken about 8:30 p.m. and hastily taken to another location a short distance away. We were held there with others who had been captured earlier. Our engineer, T/Sgt. Paul Behm was found there with a doctor checking out pulled stomach muscles and some others of our crew, that we recognized, as they were herded past the door.

"The local schoolmaster functioned as translator between ourselves and the German soldiers collecting at this location. Each of us seemed to regard the other as somewhat of a curiosity. Later a German Luftwaffe Captain appeared on the scene offering us cigarettes and warm drinks. He barked out a few orders and things hummed. He offered a friendly hand but, behind it all, could see he was of real military bearing. His English was pretty good and in words reminiscent of the farmhouse girl, assured us that for us the war was over. He fully accepted our name, rank and serial number as if he had gone through this before. We learned that he had been shot down in the air battle that noon and jokingly pointed out that our only problem was having landed in his backyard.

"Late that night we were loaded in trucks and taken for a cold, cold ride to a labor camp in the Salzburg, Austria area, where we were locked in cells. The next day we were taken to Munich, Germany and placed aboard a train, in small groups, with our guards and headed for some unknown destination. We ultimately arrived at a German processing center at Wetzlar, near Frankfurt, Germany. Here we were thoroughly checked over and interrogated. Certain items of clothing and other personal effects were taken away from us and in turn we were issued POW dog tags, toilet articles and a few other basics. We were segregated according to some design and crowded into box cars for a long journey to POW camps.

"After several days ride, we were taken out of the box cars and learned that we were in East Prussia at Stalag Luft VI, near the village of Hydekrug, in what is Lithuania. The camp had been

established for some time and was run in good systematic order. Some of the prisoners dated back to Dunkirk with an oddball collection of British, Aussies, Canadians, New Zealanders, and an increasing number of Americans, coming in on a steady basis.

"We were quartered in large barracks with a stove at each end plus an assortment of water buckets and others for personal needs to carry us through the night. During the day, when we were unlocked, there were fixed established buildings to take care of personal needs. Unfortunately one of our men was shot (S/Sgt. Walter Nies) and killed when he stepped outside, after being unlocked, on his way to wash.

"We became very acquainted with roll calls, tea, black bread, searches, and the same routine over and over again, although not necessarily in that order. From an internal point of view, our camp was extremely well organized with particular credit to a Canadian named Pauls. What was going on in the outside world was available to us on a nearly daily basis. More often than not, we knew what was going on before our captors did. We were aware of the invasion long in advance of the Germans.

"June, 1944 was extremely eventful both in the East and West. From our vantage point we could see the sky on the horizon light up, accompanied by distant rumbling of artillery, which ultimately turned out to be the Russians advancing towards the West.

"The situation had hardly taken place before we were taken to the port of Memel on the Baltic Sea. At dock was the German battleship, Prince Euan. We were unceremoniously crammed into the hold of an old coal ship and departed for another destination. Crammed is truly a gross statement. Buckets, sweat, and stench was the menu of hours that slowly passed by, your chance of sitting down, in the same spot, were pretty sketchy. Days had passed when the hold was opened up and we found ourselves docked at Stettin, Germany.

"We were hand-cuffed and put in box cars again to head to our next prison camp. Arriving at a station where we were unloaded and hand-cuffed to another prisoner for a march to the prison camp. The German officer in charge of this move was Captain Picard. He was the strutting, raging, screaming, storybook type of Nazi. Young German Marines, which were our guards, were whipped into a frenzy, which we shared, as Picard would rage and fling his arms about. If it had been his objective to depict possible and probable feelings of doom, he certainly was one howling success. He hounded and pressed the guards to strike, poke, jab, and stab at us over the entire march until we arrived at the prison camp area. One of the marines, at my side, with his eyes full of apprehension and fear, slashed at me with his bayonet, cutting my clothing and making a small cut on my side. With two of us hand-cuffed to the other, caused me to drag my buddy, Ballard, along the ground in my efforts to keep clear of any repeat action.

"At the entrance to the camp, the hysteria subsided and we found ourselves back to square one, in mid July 1944, at our new Stalag Luft IV near Grossychow, Pomerania. All was pretty much of the same routine we had previously experienced right through into early January 1945. Then the flashes and rumbles on the horizon were of sufficient cause to take us on another box car ride through Germany. Sounds of sirens and other activity told us that lots were going on and this was confirmed by peeking through cracks in the walls of the box cars. Considerable damage could be seen all through the country. Finally we arrived at Nurnburg, Germany as guests at another prison camp.

"Our new camp proved to be a cut or so different than our other prison camps. Our soups, or stews, had bugs in it. We had vermin, lice, and you could wager your grandmother that any meat found in the food meant that another dead mule had been dragged into camp. We were extremely close to targets being bombed. Many of our nights were spent sitting in shallow trenches holding a bed slat over our heads for protection. Flak shot at the bombers literally rained on us.

"Either late February or early March 1945, we were assembled outside of our barracks with all our possessions, formed into groups and marched through the gates of the camp and marched through

the back roads of Germany. We headed southeast and eventually crossed the Danube and turned back just short of Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. We marched in columns, four abreast, and headed southeast of Nurnburg, then south until we arrived at a huge prison camp at Moosdorf, Germany, Stalag VIIA.

"The countryside was beautiful and seemingly untouched by the ravages of war. Even the attitude of the people displayed a marked difference than those in the urban areas. In a sense, our protracted march was not unwelcome as it became very apparent the plus/minus 20 km hikes each day extracted a greater toll on our guards.

"Although the scenic countryside was beautiful, our column was strafed by our own fighters one day, mistaking us for German troop movements. As a result of this happening, from that day on we had an umbrella of our planes overhead all the way to the gates of Moosdorf. It was truly medicine for us and awakening of the truth for our captors. It was countdown to the end.

"There were somewhat of 27,000 prisoners at Moosdorf comprised of Russians, Mongols, Serbs, Croats, British, French, Arabs, Gurkhas, Senegalese, and Americans. You name the nationality and you would be sure to find it in this group.

"When the end came it was April 29, 1945. We saw tanks and ground forces descending into the camp. Units of the Third and Seventh had arrived and, for us, the war was really over! I never saw so many medics, Chaplains and other people breaking their backs feeding us, being kind to us, helping communicate with loved ones or attempting to cater to whatever crazy wish we expressed. Shortly after all the attention, pills and communications with those at home was history, we were transported to the Regensburg/Schweinfurt local and flown to France, trucked to LaHavre and Camp Lucky Strike. While there we were debriefed, counseled, provided new clothing and equipage to include measured diets to make us sound. We were constantly shown warmth and friendliness. There simply wasn't any such things as bad rumors - all rumors were good.

"At last we boarded a ship and departed LaHavre, France and stopped at Liverpool, England before continuing homeward. I can't say how many days our cruise across the Atlantic lasted, but I can assure you that we sipped egg nogs all the way. After all, I had to pick up 42 pounds that had been lost along the way."

S/Sgt. Ernest Henderson, RW on B-17 #42-31873. October 25, 1990: "I enlisted in the Army Air Corps on October 2, 1942, and after basic training went to gunnery school at Fort Myers, Florida. Five weeks later I had my gunnery wings and was promoted to Sergeant. I can say that I was sure proud and felt at that time I could almost walk on water. My next stop was at Lowery Field, Colorado to armament school and on to Ephrata, Washington. It was there that I came together with nine of the finest people that I was to know. My crew: Joseph J. Pausha, pilot; Vic Marturano, co-pilot; Gerald A. Voska, navigator; Frank Barron, bombardier; Paul H. Behm, upper turret; myself, ball turret; John D. Martin, left waist; Edward Clancy, right waist; John W. Dunlop, tail gunner; and Earl J. Wilkins, radio operator. We had completed our final training and after furloughs, proceeded to Newport News, Virginia and then by convoy to North Africa. It was there that we were assigned to the 49th Squadron of the 2nd Bomb Group.

"We started flying missions with veteran crews until all of us had combat experience. After a few of this type of missions we came back to being our own crew; flying together as a team.

"Our first plane was 'WOLF HOLLOW,' with Uncle Sam as the wolf and the Three Little Pigs were Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. We went on some long missions out of North Africa, crossing the Mediterranean Sea to targets in Italy and the Balkan countries. After the invasion of Sicily and Italy, we moved to Italy and then were hitting targets in Northern Italy and all the Balkan countries. The worst for me was flying across the Po Valley. I hated the flak and that place was just plain Hell! Once we flew a mission that the flak was so thick we couldn't see the plane ahead of us. We came back to

the base so full of holes, we were like a sieve. It was here that we said goodbye to 'WOLF HOLLOW' and were issued a new B-17 with closed in waist windows. We liked our new B-17 but it was with mixed feelings that we left our old standby behind.

"On February 23, 1944 we went down to the operations tent to see if we had a mission on the 24th. Listed on the board we were down to fly what we called the 'COFFIN CORNER.' The next morning we learned that our target was Steyr, Austria, an aircraft components factory.

"The day came up cold and clear and two of our crew were down sick and went on sick call. They were replaced by Phil Ashook, who took my place in the ball turret. I went to the waist and Lt. Charles P. Olsen went as our bombardier.

"All the planes formed up well and we started north to our target. As we neared the coast of Italy, one of our crew said, 'Take a good look, I don't think we will see it again.' It was then we all had a feeling that something was going to happen.

"We test fired our guns and settled down for awhile. As we crossed the coast into enemy territory, we were on the alert for fighters and flak. We were deep into enemy territory when we were hit by a large force of Me-109s and FW-190s. They came at us from all directions. It was then that I wished we had turned back like one of the 96th did. But we were so busy defending ourselves, all of our thoughts were on getting rid of those fighters.

"I looked out the right waist window and counted ten Me-109s coming right at our position in the formation. Nine of them did not make it, the tenth rolled right through and shooting all the way. One Me-109 exploded right off our wing. It was at this point that I heard the pilot say, 'My God Vic, we have lost our instrument panel' and smoke filled the cockpit. Our crew heard the abandon ship bell and the pilot telling us to get out. As I turned, I saw Jack Dunlop kicking out the door and he disappeared from my sight. I next left the plane and as I looked back, I counted nine chutes open. I thought we all got out but not sure of the tenth. Thank God, when we got to POW camp, all ten were alive.

"I landed on top of a mountain peak and, about 100 yards on the other side of the peak, Jack Dunlop landed. I was in snow up to my armpits and was starting to get real cold. Using my vocal cords, I quickly got in touch with Dunlop. We had no idea where we were, what country we were in and what direction to go. Being high up in the Alps we knew we had to get to lower ground, or freeze. We slid down the mountain on our butts. It took us a long time and we were starting to get real cold. We finally came to what must have been a logging road with a camp. We came into the camp and, with a calendar on the wall, figured we were in Austria, but not sure. We followed the logging road to a farmhouse. It was here we were introduced to the Home Guard, who were looking for us. The Home Guard was made up of old men and young boys. The young boys wanted to show us how tough they could be. We were taken to a small town where we were put on a flat bed truck to be moved to Salzburg, Austria. Boy, that was a cold ride! By now it was night and the trip was about 20 miles. We were put in separate cells with one thin blanket to keep us warm. I don't need to tell you, it didn't work, no sleep. We kept jumping up and down to keep warm.

"The next day they took us to the train station in Salzburg, which had been bombed on other missions. We were not liked by the people, who spit and threw rocks and other stuff at us. Looking up the mountain, I could see the monastery where they made the musical, 'The Sound of Music.'

"We were put on the train and sent to Frankfurt-Am-Main, Germany. Here we came together again and I found all the rest of the crew had made it. It was here we were interrogated by the Germans. Name, rank and serial number, but they knew more about us than we did ourselves. From here we were separated for good, the officers going to one camp and the enlisted men to another.

"We were sent to Stalag Luft VI and introduced to POW life. POW life in Stalag Luft VI was not too bad. We were warm, had enough to eat and through the Salvation Army, had all sorts of

sporting equipment to use. We had softball teams and played different barracks. It was here that we got our first Red Cross parcel, which we were supposed to get each week, but never did.

"Someone bribed the guards, so a radio was made and we were getting BBC news. We really knew what was going on all the time. The news from the Russian front, with the Russians moving so fast, we knew we would be freed or have to move. In July 1945 we got the answer.

"We were put in box cars and moved to the coast. There were so many of us in each box car that we were unable to lay down. Sitting, with our legs stuck under our chin, it took two days to get to our destination, which was a boat used to carry coal. On this boat were five or six levels. We were stacked like cattle, still not having much room to move or stretch out. For once I was lucky. I was one of the last on board and in a position close to the open hatch. I was able to get fresh air and a cool breeze. I was really sorry for those in lower levels, hot, dirty, and the smell was terrible. Eating meals and getting water was out of the question. The guards kept telling us we would be at our next prison camp soon.

"Arriving, we were told to take off our belts and shoes. This was to prevent us from trying to escape. Again loaded in box cars for our trip to Stalag Luft IV. After reaching our destination, we were hand-cuffed by chain links and not given time to put on our shoes or belts. We were forced to run two to three kilometers. The Captain of the German guards was very mean and his men were 15 to 16 years old. They were told that we were American gangsters and were to take nothing from us. They were told to use their bayonets or rifles if we did not keep up. They kept us going by using dogs and they would stick us with bayonets. We were unable to carry our personal belongings and run at the same time. Many of us just dropped our personal items on the roadside.

"It was at Stalag Luft IV that we found out what being a prisoner of war was all about. Our treatment at this camp was one of harassment, intimidation, and just plain mean. We were never allowed to do much without a guard watching. When we arrived at camp, we were stripped and searched everywhere to make sure we didn't have anything hidden away. One of the guards, who we called 'Ham Hands,' was very cruel. He beat some, pushed and kicked others; not many of us got by him. By the way, he got his name by having the biggest hands I have ever seen. Our receiving BBC news came to an end and most of the news we heard were rumors.

"We left Stalag Luft IV on or about Valentine's Day, 1945, and the rest of our POW life was spent marching. We marched for about 80 days, slept in fields, barns or any place they wanted to put us. Cold, wet and always uncomfortable; not eating, dirty, it made life miserable. I don't believe there wasn't one of us that didn't pray and ask God to take care of us and guide us through this miserable trip. I really believe this experience has made me keep the Lord in my life.

"On May 5th we were liberated by a squad of British soldiers. We knew something was wrong. When we started moving about we found there were no German guards around anywhere. By ten o'clock the British had us started back to Allied lines and freedom, something that most Americans take for granted. We crossed the Elbe River and were flown back to Brussels, Belgium. Here we came under U.S. control again.

"We were transferred to Camp Lucky Strike. When I was taken prisoner I weighed 140/145 pounds. When I was released I tipped the scales at 84 pounds. While at Lucky Strike, we had two very important visitors. One was General Bradley and the other was General Ike, each thanking us for what we had gone through for our country.

"Back in the States we were granted leave for 60 days. I was not allowed to go home until I reached 100 pounds.

"I don't know if this will ever be read by anyone, but I would not close without saying, to all those who made this trip with me, a very special 'THANK YOU!' Without your help and encouragement, I would have given up. A special 'THANK YOU' to Phil Walters from Readfield,

Maine who carried me on his back for three days as my feet were all blistered and bloody. Again, 'Thank You and God Bless.'"

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #41-24618 - 49TH SQUADRON

F/O	George P. Durney, T-60096, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	James D. Wise, 0-663821, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Harold E. Larsen, 0-692027, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Bernard M. Martin, Jr., 0-729778, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Claston D. Campbell, 18060868, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	William (NMI) Meiselbar, 35372740, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Jesse C. Hart, 6821740, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Elvyn O. Hollingsworth, 18047222, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Edward J. McCarvel, 33237569, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Charles A. Daughdrill, 18010989, R/O.	(POW)

2nd Lt. James D. Wise, CP on A/C #41-24681. July 5, 1991: I had flown 41 combat sorties before that day, February 24, 1944, when our crew was shot down on the mission to Steyr, Austria.

"Many of our missions were to targets in support of our ground forces; marshalling yards, railroad bridges, road junctions, and beachheads. We hit many airdromes to soften up the German Air Force, aircraft factories and steel works. We flew three missions to Southern France, two missions to Greece, and several missions into Austria. Sofia, Bulgaria was a particularly tough target, always encountering a large enemy fighter force.

"Of course the mission to Steyr was the most memorable one. The sky was clear and there were three Groups of us and we were the rear Group. We were crossing the Alps and it was here that they decided to hit us. I looked up and there were 21 in line abreast coming in at 4:00 o'clock high. There would be one or two B-17s gone in just a minute. After the first pass I don't know how many of us were left. They would come in, six or eight at a time in criss-crossing waves at our rear. Between 120 to 130 of them.

"Early in the game we got a bad hit in the left wing and lost No. 2 engine. We didn't have to feather it but lost a lot of power from it. We had to salvo our bombs to keep near the Squadron. The glass above and behind Durney, our first pilot, came through and his head started bleeding. I thought he might be hit bad so I shook him. He shook his head.

"We were both damn busy but I could see one of our planes veer away, on fire, now and then. I couldn't see too much of the fighting as it was materializing from the rear. Far below, a B-17 was gliding down apparently, OK. Maybe his wheels were down and there were no fighters near him.

"Our plane had holes and strips of streaming metal just this side of the aileron and trailing edge. Jess Hart, who was one of the waist gunners, called and said we had holes in our horizontal stabilizer.

"After this we swung our two wing men into trail, which was per instructions at briefing. At the I.P. on the bomb run we lost one of them. We were #5 Squadron. I didn't have any idea how #6 Squadron was doing but could make a damn good guess. The flak at the target was welcome.

"It wasn't long before all the planes behind us were gone. No. 3 engine had lost power and our bomb bay doors wouldn't come up, causing more drag, and in no time we were dropping back ourselves. I took a quick tally and told Durney I didn't think we would make it. Thirteen planes had gone down. I called the Group leader and asked, no pleaded with, them to slow down.

"Slim Campbell came down from his top turret and said he was out of ammunition as were two other gunners. The others were running out fast. We were at 19,000 feet and losing altitude fast. Most

of the controls were shot out. We had the AFCE set up since the flak began. A 20mm exploded and hit the top turret Slim had just climbed out of.

"In the distance the P-38 escort appeared. 'Just five more minutes,' I said. We called them. The flak started after us and we pulled around after the Group. Another pilot told me later they were instructed to leave us.

"The fighters made two more passes. On the first pass they got Durney's controls and he told me to get his chute. While I was getting it they hit us again and great flames rolled up inside the bomb bay. It was time to go. The navigator told me later that not a bit of glass was left in the nose. He also said that the crew got 11 enemy fighters, which I didn't doubt."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-29638 - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Frank H. Glass, 0-669701, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Russell L. Little, 0-803520, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. John (NMI) Bacsu, 0-749416, N.	(POW)
1st Lt. Eugene M. Hayes, 0-563264, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Robert M. Garnett, 15082163, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Richard L. Hancock, 11044776, L/T.	(POW)
Cpl. Donald B. Torpy, 13021464, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Edmund F. Ward, 34306211, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Rex C. Cooper, Jr., 20904544, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Robert M. Rand, 20113061, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of 1st Lt. Frank H. Glass, P, after liberation: "The plane went down approximately 15 to 20 miles east of Salzburg, Austria. I bailed out with six others: Lt. Hayes, Lt. Bacsu, T/Sgt. Garnett, S/Sgt. Ward, Cpl. Torpy, and S/Sgt. Hancock.

"Lt. Little did not bail out. I told him to feather an engine when it was hit and as he leaned forward to do so we received a burst in the cockpit and he fell forward in his seat belt. The cockpit was riddled with 20mm and machine gun fire three times. I believe he was hit hard by the last two bursts. He fell forward and just stayed there the rest of the time. His body was still in the burning, spinning plane when I bailed out.

"I do not believe S/Sgt. Cooper bailed out. Just prior to the loss of the plane, S/Sgt. Cooper called out fighters before they made their initial pass and I could feel the vibrations of the tail guns, at first, before the top turret opened up. The tail of my ship was riddled many times. I could feel the explosions in the tail control surfaces through the rudder and elevator controls and I was told later, by the pilot behind me, that most of my tail was shot off. So I believe that Sgt. Cooper was killed by 20mm or machine gun fire, which was known to riddle the tail.

"T/Sgt. Rand was killed instantly by a rocket exploding in the radio room before I gave the order to bail out. The left waist gunner, Sgt. Ward, heard the rocket explode in the radio room and stepped in to look. There he saw Sgt. Rand's body. Our formation was under attack by rocket carrying Ju-88s and FW-190s and we had not reached the flak area yet. Sgt. Ward said there was a hole in both sides of the radio room about six feet in diameter."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31870 - 49TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Clarence T. Moyer, 0-800389, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. Jay L. Monicken, 0-803659, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Robert D. Dodson, 0-811586, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. Vincent A. Kepler, 0-679545, B.	(KIA)

S/Sgt.	Saul M. Tauber, 32613354, U/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Charles B. Ball, 37655772, L/T.	(POW)
Sgt.	Carl H. Davis, 37172916, R/W.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Edward C. Moleti, 31203871, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Marlin E. Eckels, 13094806, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	James H. Jones, 31191805, R/O.	(KIA)

2nd Lt. Jay L. Monicken, CP of A/C #42-31870. April 13, 1990: "We flew a new B-17G over from the States but before we flew our first mission, a Major wanted to fly his last mission in a new plane. It was supposed to be a 'milk run.' It was his last mission, also for the plane.

"Having no plane assignment, our crew then flew as replacements. Our navigator, 2nd Lt. John V. Harrop, was shot down over Yugoslavia but the underground repatriated him in May of 1944. Our bombardier, Lt. Robert Gallup, was already in a hospital with flak wounds when this last mission was called. My co-pilot, Don Larsen, went to Foggia to visit him while my engineer, S/Sgt. Saul Tauber, flew replacement with Moyer. The rest of the crew I had never met.

"On February 23, as I recall it, the Group was briefed for Steyr, Austria but the recon planes found the target was overcast, so the mission was aborted. We didn't have radar then. We instead circled over the Tyrrhenian Sea, using up fuel before landing.

"February 24, we were again briefed for Steyr. The old hands said it would be a tough mission, since somehow if the mission was briefed for two days in a row it would be a tough mission. It seems the Nazis were always informed and ready.

"The 2nd Bomb Group was the last Wave over the target. The I.P. was Lambach. We encountered some flak, but nothing serious. Then it seems that the Nazis had everything that could fly, up against us. I thought I even saw Stukas, service ceiling 12,000 feet, up at 24,000 feet. Most of the attacks were from 6:00 o'clock and the worst were the Ju-88s with their 20mm cannon. They stayed out of range and picked us off, one at a time, from the rear.

"Our tail gunner, S/Sgt. Eckels, was dead when a 20mm, I think, got us in the elevators. We went up into a stall, with the engines full power, while Moyer and I tried to push the control column forward with our feet; it was useless, just like pushing on a giant spring. I wanted to control with the auto pilot but Moyer said, 'No,' and we fell off in a spin. We tried to stop it with opposite full rudder but it then started to wind the other way. Moyer called 'MAY DAY' to abandon. I don't recall hearing acknowledgments from any of the rest of the crew. As I recall it, Moyer went to the navigator's compartment while I headed for the bomb bay. The bomb bay doors were open but the bombs, 500 lbs., were still in the shackles.

"The plane was really winding up, so I crawled across the base of the top turret and pulled the salvo ball, but nothing happened. Engineer Tauber was gone. I guess maybe I panicked because I tried to jump between the fore bulkhead and bombs. My chest pack got hung up in the arming vanes of the bombs. That's all I remember until I woke up, falling free.

"I went to pull the ripcord with my right hand but had my chute on upside down, so I pulled the handle with my left hand but it wouldn't let loose. I presumed the vanes had bent the soft pin that holds the chute together, so I flipped up the flap and straightened the pin and pulled again. I must have been tumbling because when the chute opened it straightened me out so that my flying boots took off, landing me in my oxfords. My back ached for six months after that.

"An Me-109, I think, was circling me and I thought of stories of airmen being shot in their chutes by fighters but he never angled in on me. He just gunned enough to keep flying speed until I landed on the side of a mountain in snow up to my waist. Then he took off.

"Three men about a half mile away were yelling at me. I was trying to unhook the chute from the harness, but they must have thought I was reaching for a gun because they started shooting, so I dropped down in the snow. When a round kicked up snow next to my elbow, I raised my hands as best I could from a prone position. On the off chance we may have drifted into Switzerland, I asked them if they were Swiss. They assured me they were 'Hitler.' I had no major wounds except the back of my hands were lacerated, both my goggles were smashed and the back of my helmet was cut clear across, horizontally.

"They marched me to a farm with a bunkhouse with several British POWs sitting outside, calling 'good show,' etc. I was taken into the bunkhouse, made to lie down on a bunk and since I was so exhausted, probably from lack of oxygen, I either passed out or fell asleep. When I woke up, there were two or three women carefully taking apart the panels of my chute.

"Two of the men marched me single file down a path, cleared through the snow, down the side of the mountain. These men were Landwacht people, apparently, for I was not searched, so I tore up my briefing notes and let them blow away and threw away my Masonic ring, as instructed by S-2.

"In the valley, they marched me through a small town, maybe Lambach, and upstairs to an office with all the Nazi trappings, swastikas, Hitler, Goering, etc. I was told to lay on the floor. Late, after sunset, they brought in a Sgt. Ball and I found he was the ball turret gunner on Moyer's crew. He had been captured across town from where I was captured. He told me that when he got the 'May Day' call he rolled the ball with the guns down so he could get out of the hatch and get his chute. He said that the radio operator, T/Sgt. Jones, and waist gunners, Sgt. Davis and Sgt. Moleti, were trying to get the main loading hatch door opened, but it was jammed. He said he put his shoulder to the door and they pushed him and he went out the hatch. He said he had not seen them afterwards.

"After much phoning, two officers came and we were taken in the back of a four-door Ford, which got stuck. We made an attempt to get out while the officers were digging the car out but we didn't even get out of the car. The rest of the trip, the officer in the front passenger seat watched us with a pistol in hand. We were then taken to what I think was Linz and into some officer's quarters where there were about a dozen others that had been captured. When others arrived, we were loaded into trucks and taken to Wels Air Base and into a mess hall where they gave us some soup. We slept there, on the floor of the mess hall that night. There were a lot of prisoners there, some I had not seen since training in the States in the Arnold Provisional Group. It runs in my mind that some were from England, so the mission must have been coordinated from the Eighth and Fifteenth Air forces.

"I had the opportunity to talk to some of the officers in the formation and there was a navigator, 2nd Lt. Harold Larsen, who was just ahead of us and he saw us go up and into a stall and then a spin. He told me it appeared that two men dropped out of the navigator's hatch, just as we fell over in a spin and may have hit their heads on the ball turret guns that were turned down for escape. He said he saw one parachute open. Some POWs said they saw my engineer, S/Sgt. Saul M. Tauber, dead on the ground, covered by his chute.

"As I recall, the next day we were loaded on a train to Frankfurt-Am-Main for interrogation. There were so many of us that they didn't have enough solitary confinement rooms and about 20 of us were put into one solitary room overnight.

"From Dulag Luft, we were taken across town to a Red Cross station where we were issued overcoats, underwear, toilet articles, etc. We were permitted to send cards to our parents. The next day we were loaded on box cars and over a period of three or four days, completed our trip from Frankfurt, via Berlin, to Barth and Stalag Luft I.

"My co-pilot, Lt. Larsen, arrived with the pilot, Lt. Storm. He had been assigned for a mission on February 25th to Regensburg. He also told me that the waist gunners, Sgt. Honis and McDaniel; radio operator, S/Sgt. Miller; and tail gunner, Sgt. Vaughan, from our original crew were on board with

him. As time passed, Larsen and I thought our bombardier, Gallup, had recovered from his wounds, finished his missions and gone back to the States. In June or July we saw him being marched into Stalag Luft I, Compound III. Navigator Harrop, on being repatriated, was sent back to the States and was involved in many War Bond drives, eventually got his pilot's wings and, I believe, stayed in the Air Force until his retirement."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #41-24571 - "INDIANAPOLIS WAR BIRD" - 49TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Harry C. Meyer, 0-799429, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Ralph J. Sneed, 0-745209, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. John J. McTeague, 0-739044, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Ralph L. Karsh, 0-679540, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Benjamin M. Hughes, 6885542, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Edwin D. Jackson, 15331978, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Webb J. Digh, 34437401, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Lawrence J. Dunn, 31280514, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. John B. McMullin, 12172252, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Kinnon W. Taylor, 7001234, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Ralph K. Karsh, B on A/C #41-24571, after liberation: "I bailed out with Lt. Meyer, Lt. Sneed, Lt. McTeague, S/Sgt. Dunn, T/Sgt. Hughes, and S/Sgt. Taylor. I think S/Sgt. McMullin, S/Sgt. Jackson, and S/Sgt. Digh were dead according to other crew members, but I have no definite knowledge of that.

"Lt. McTeague bailed out through the escape hatch in the nose, which later jammed. Both pilot and co-pilot bailed out through the bomb bay. The radio operator bailed out with me. We bailed out at approximately 21,000 feet and landed near the small town of Ampflwang, Austria. The treatment wasn't bad at all and the food sufficient. Jail was run by a Captain (police) and two policemen who were not very bright.

"Meyer, Sneed, McTeague and myself were in the same jail. We met Sgts. Dunn and Taylor at the airport in Wels, Austria where we were taken for a three-hour ride from the village. Our plane was reported to have hit a farmhouse and exploded. One bomb was still hung up in the racks."

A German casualty report issued by the German Command at Vocklabruck, Austria, stated that the bodies of Sgts. Digh, McMullin, and Jackson had been recovered and buried in a forest near Moosbach, Austria.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31390 - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Darrel W. Mayfield, 0-742878, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. William M. O'Hare, 0-748460, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Leo W. Zaplatynski, 0-696006, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Edwin W. Nunnery, 0-673924, B.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Wilbur M. Gustafson, 18157570, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Nathan W. Lubowski, 18189816, L/T.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Woodrow N. Lundquist, 37094691, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Mervyn E. Deibel, 32834549, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Ralph E. Johnson, 39905018, T/G.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Richard I. Basehore, 20822941, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of 2nd Lt. William M. O'Hare, CP of A/C #42-31390, after liberation: "I believe that eight of us got out altogether. Lts. Mayfield, Nunnery, Zaplatynski, T/Sgt. Lundquist, S/Sgt. Deibel, S/Sgt. Gustafson, and myself were captured at Wels, Austria. S/Sgt. Basehore and S/Sgt. Johnson believed to have been in the plane when it either exploded or crashed. S/Sgt. Lubowski was the first to have parachuted from the waist.

"T/Sgt. Lundquist helped S/Sgt. Lubowski out the waist door and that was the last seen of him. It is not known if he was injured, but was seen jumping from the plane. There was a lot of lead coming through the plane so it is possible that his chute was hit before jumping.

"I don't know if S/Sgt. Johnson bailed out. T/Sgt. Lundquist and S/Sgt. Deibel followed S/Sgt. Lubowski out of the waist thinking that S/Sgt. Johnson would follow. He was last seen in the waist ready to leave. S/Sgt. Johnson had come from the tail and S/Sgt. Basehore from the radio room and they were both on the left side of the waist when last seen. I remember that is what Lundquist told me after we were captured.

"When I was captured with Lundquist, I was taken to a building in Wels. In an hour or so a girl about age 12 came into the room, excited, and headed for the officer in charge, with some parts of a bomb sight and an envelope containing one of Sgt. Johnson's dog tags. I couldn't understand a word that was said. Whether that girl got the dog tag from Sgt. Johnson's body is not known.

"I believe that S/Sgt. Basehore bailed out. He was last seen preparing to jump. From hearsay information from other men, I gathered that he had been shot on the ground or just prior, in his chute, by the Germans."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31666 - "MISS LAID" - 96TH SQUADRON

Capt.	John W. Thalken, 0-791158, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Richard L. Gower, 0-802608, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Samuel P. Mayer, 0-683848, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	William C. Williams, 0-676901, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Herman (NMI) Sussman, 6932684, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Karl J. Letters, 31078048, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert T. Peterson, 16070345, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Thomas H. Bell, 31157197, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Joseph A. Peters, 13008414, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	George O. Dean, 18131001, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Roger C. DeClements, CP of B-17 #42-5777 after the mission. "We were on the bomb run, about five minutes before bombs away and plane #42-31666 was to the right and behind us. There were only one or two other planes in the Squadron at this time. I saw a fighter coming in at 2:00 o'clock, level, which closed to about 500 yards from #666 and he apparently got the pilot and co-pilot with his bursts. No. 666 nosed up momentarily and then went into a steep spiraling dive and that was the last I saw of it."

S/Sgt. Robert T. Peterson, RW Gunner on B-17 #42-31666. February 15, 1990: "February 24th found me filling in for a crew member that had burned his arm in a tent-stove accident. His name was Oscar Rome and his position that day was to have been the right waist gunner. The plane was a B-17G named "MISS LAID" with the last three numbers of the serial number being #666.

"George Dean, the radio operator, showed up without electrically heated flying gloves and parachute harness. I had extra gloves and a mechanic came up with a harness.

"We formed up and headed north for Steyr, Austria but one plane turned back due to an engine problem. Our element was the second from the rear of the entire formation with the 49th behind in their 'TAIL END CHARLIE' position. My pilot was Captain 'Bill' Thalken with Lt. Byrne on our left wing and I believe, Lt. Darrel Mayfield on our right wing.

"Before we got to the target we were jumped by loads of eager beaver, almost 'Kamikaze' fighters, both Me-109s and FW-190s. Primarily they started at our rear and the bombers and fighters began to go down like clockwork, like the children's ditty about 'ten little Indians, and then there were none.'

"We picked up a big hole in our right wing but it didn't fire up and I figured we would make it to the target. About then, the plane on our right, Mayfield's, got a flaming explosion in their right wing that threw them up and over us. At this time we were approaching the I.P. and then we lost our left wingman, Lt. Byrne, which left us a single plane about a mile behind the balance of the Group with no hope of catching up.

"Two Me-109s came in to almost our right wingtip and as I raked them with fire, they gave off puffs of smoke and dropped away. It was about this time that our radio man came to the rear of the plane to bail out and the left waist gunner, S/Sgt. Thomas Bell, motioned that he was out of ammo. I think we had two engines out by this time and no intercom working but no fire was visible to me. Tom Bell got his chute and motioned to mine. Joe Peters', tail gunner, chute had opened so he had to cradle it in his arms to bail out.

"Dean, Bell and I were grouped very close together while coming down and an Me-109 came in and did a roll-over by my feet causing my chute to collapse. As a Christian I didn't need a fire escape from hell but certainly prayed that Jesus would 'be with me' and I feel that he has been with me ever since.

"With three chutes close together, we came down near a small Austrian town that probably was our I.P., and we were met with a small plane that began to circle us all the way down. It was disconcerting to see bomb craters in this small community, some with dirt and bricks thrown back on top of maybe 14 inches of snow.

"As we came down to the ground I thought I would hit some high tension wires so began to slip my chute and had it collapse a second time. I just turned the shroud lines loose and it reopened.

"The three of us got together on the ground, but because of the closeness of the town, that plane and the deep snow, we were soon captured by an Austrian Home Guard Unit along with a Lt. who I first thought to be Lt. Kurtz of the 20th Squadron. However, he was not from Chicago so it may have been Lt. Bartell, the co-pilot that day with Lt. George Verbruggen's crew. He was from Chicago also so we came into special treatment as 'flying gangsters from Chicago.' Whoever it was, was bleeding from hand or arm, but quite composed. I knew that all the NCOs from our plane got out because they all showed up at Stalag Luft VI and knew that Captain Thalken and 1st Lt. Perry Mayer, navigator, got out but have not seen Lts. Williams or Gower since.

"During our interment at Stalag Luft VI, S/Sgt. Walter Nies of the 96th Squadron, shot down 24 January 1944 over Sofia, Bulgaria, was shot and killed because he left his room early one morning before the guard had left the compound. The guard was removing the 2 x 4s that locked each room.

"Escape was a preoccupation for most and each plan was supposed to be cleared with an 'escape committee.' Roy Grandquist was my rep. No escapes were made from Stalag Luft VI alive in spite of 'Hogan's Heros.' The camp was built on sand with an outer fence, then barbed wire, an inner fence, a 'V' ditch and a warning wire in front of the ditch. If anyone touched the warning wire, the guards in the tower would shoot and the ditch would collapse in on the tunnels.



Sgts. R. Peterson, O. Beene, W. Lundquist - after liberation
(Courtesy - R. Peterson)



April 26, 1945 - Liberated American POWs by 104th Infantry Division - Crossing Mulde River
at Bitterfeld, Germany (Courtesy - R. Peterson)

"In July we were evacuated from Stalag Luft VI by a coal ship named 'MAUSEREN.' Before we left they gave us Red Cross parcels from the warehouse - POWs were supposed to get one each week, but seldom received them.

"July 18th was the day we made the 'BAYONET RUN' to Stalag Luft IV from the train station. They had taken our shoes and belts from us after leaving the boat and boarding a train to take us to the new camp. This action was to prevent an attempt to escape. That day we were hurriedly lined up at the train station and before we could get our shoes and belts on, we were forced to start running to the camp. Many of us were also hand-cuffed to another POW. As we started to run, this red faced German Captain shouted at the young 15-17 year old marines guarding us, that these were the 'flying gangsters from Chicago' and they should use their weapons, which were rifles with bayonets. In addition to being hand-cuffed, we were trying to carry our food we had not been able to eat for three days for lack of water. As we stumbled along the road, we could see in the woods on either side, soldiers with machine guns. Word was passed down the line that we were being forced to try to escape and be shot down by the guards in the woods as these young guys and guards, with dogs, kept chasing and jabbing with bayonets.

"The net result was that most of the POWs dropped their supplies and ran the two - three kms as best they could, being hand-cuffed, cramped from the box car and boat ride, and lack of water. Many were falling down, as my partner did, but most escaped the bayonets. Hundreds were struck or bleeding but I don't believe any were run through. I saw one Luftwaffe guard fall of heat prostration as he tried to make the run. I made the run with all my 'stuff' and picked up 11 lbs. of dried milk in 1-lb. cans and carried all my things in a pair of long johns that were knotted and tied around my neck. They kept us outside the camp for more than a day without water. We couldn't eat the milk, etc., and then we were sent into camp to water, without food.

"Many of the POWs don't want to make any connection to their experiences. I didn't for 40 years. In prison it was not unusual to hear someone start relating his bail-out story and have his friend say, 'I'll listen to your story for a candy bar.' Everyone had his own story: 'I came down in a B-17 tail, no chute.' 'I survived a streamer via evergreens and snow on a mountain slope.' Joe Peters bailed out with his chute like a bundle of laundry. Bob Woodruff, 306th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, was putting on his harness when the plane blew, came to in the air with one arm in the harness and couldn't get it on so pulled the D-ring and next he knew he was coming to the ground held on by his radio operators wrist watch; his arm survived. Many of the guys became so tired of the stories they became anti-social.

"We were evacuated from Stalag Luft IV on February 6, 1945. Then we were forced marched for about 80 days. It was on this march that John Clark died (20th Squadron, crewman of Lt. Paul A. Foust). As I recall, he was injured on February 24th and showed up at Stalag Luft VI, fully recovered, about a month after his crew. He looked better than most of us. After we marched out of Stalag Luft IV, we went for nine days with only what we carried out of camp. We had snow for water and I was with most of Clark's crew: Beene, Riccio and Hammond. Word was passed through the column that John had died in his sleep. Talking to Byrne's radio operator, T/Sgt. Everett Bauman, last month, he said he was there when John couldn't be revived. An English doctor chewed out a German officer because he died of blood poisoning from a foot infection. Most of us had bloody feet.

"On the long march, we slept where the day ended, barn yards, open fields, swamps, and sometimes in barns with hay and 500 to 600 other guys. We watched as fuel tank farms were bombed, as P-47s strafed along rail yards and as a P-47 bombed a locomotive that unhooked from a train and tried to make a run for it - he didn't make it! Saw submarines and V-2s as well as various other rockets and early jets, but the best thing we saw was an American jeep with an armed American Major who came over the Mulde River at Bitterfield, Germany and took us into the lines of the 104th Infantry Division on April 26th, 1945.

"In two weeks we were in Camp Lucky Strike, which was a hospital tent camp for RAMPs: Recovered-Allied-Military-Personnel, near LaHavre, France. I have the feeling we were drugged there for recovery purposes. It seemed that we would get out of our cots to eat and go back to cot-eat-cot, etc. About the 1st of June, Lundquist, Beene and I got off the cots to get to the cheese sandwich and egg nog line the Red Cross girls had set up. It was rainy and sloppy as we passed through the tent and just as we got our sandwich and egg nog, bullets began to fly through the tent. Naturally we all flattened out on the floor, without spilling egg nog and sandwiches. When the shooting stopped we got up but the guy next to us, on one side, took a slug to the head and lay still. On the other side, a Lt. got shot through the arm. Later on, we found that some blacks got drunk and decided to go into the Red Cross women's tent but a young guard with a carbine stopped them. We had been bombed, strafed and bruised from the Russian front to the American lines but that was a bad day, so we went back to our cots.

"After about three weeks, I hitched a ride to England on a B-17 and stayed there two weeks. I then caught a ship for the STATES! I was discharged at San Antonio, Texas in September of 1945.

"The war made many changes in our lives. We met many men, saw the good times and the bad, and some experiences drew some men so close together that you would have thought they were brothers. Such a brother to me was Technical Sergeant Woodrow "Swede" Lundquist. We first met in North Africa. I had been moved around in various positions until I finally signed up for gunnery and that is where I met Swede. We hit it off right away and eventually ended up together in the 96th Squadron as replacement gunners with several others. In Italy we were grouped in one tent, felt like stepchildren, with no regular crew. Whenever a gunner was needed to fill in, one or all of us might get that early morning call. Such was the case of that February 24th morning. Swede filled in on the crew of Lt. Darrel Mayfield at the right waist and I on the crew of Captain Thalken, also at the right waist spot. It was ironic that we went down on the same mission, ended up in the same POW camp and the same barracks. We survived together! After the war we kept in touch but Swede had a sort of wanderlust. He never married, never really settled down, went from place to place, job to job and for a time, worked with me in my trucking business. One day in November 1989, I had a call from Swede that he wasn't feeling well and I told him he should check into a Veteran's hospital, which he did. I had another call from him November 22nd and he was in the Veterans Hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He said he was feeling fine and was to check out of the hospital the next day. The next day I received a call from the hospital that Swede had died of a heart attack. He had given my name as a person to notify in case of death. Swede was buried in the Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, with full military honors. Another brave American, and Brother, laid to rest."

T/Sgt. Herman Sussman, Flight engineer on A/C #42-31666. March 29, 1992: "I arrived in England with a service squadron in June of 1942 via the Queen Mary as a T/Sgt. (pre-war status). I functioned as an airplane and engine mechanic whose duties were to remove any and all damaged airplanes from runways or fields and repair them or salvage usable parts. Our Material Group was with the invasion forces at Oran, Algeria, and later moved to Tunis.

"I had sought a transfer out of the Material Group and the only outfit I could transfer into, in rank, was a Bomb Squadron. Having worked on B-17s and having met several of the Engineering Officers, I was told to see the Commanding Officer of the 96th Squadron. He told me there were no openings on the ground crew for an airplane and engine mechanic with the T/O at that time, but, he had an opening for a Flight Engineer Gunner. I told him I was well qualified as a mechanic but had no experience in gunnery training. I was told not to worry about not having any training as he would see to it that I would have all the training necessary after the transfer. After being transferred to the 96th Squadron, I received about three hours total in the upper turret mock-up, about 30 minutes of break

down of the twin 50 caliber machine guns, one session with an aircraft recognition class, and a couple of flights around the Base to get acquainted with the duties of a flight engineer on take-offs and landings.

"When I first shipped overseas my dog tags had my name, serial number, blood type and religion. After being transferred to the 96th Squadron, I immediately cut off the corner of the tag that had religion printed on it, and as it turned out later, it proved to be a good move on my part.

"On February 23, 1944, the Group was scheduled on a mission to Steyr, Austria (my 34th mission), but the mission was scrubbed. As per usual, after a mission, or on a free day, some of the different crew members would go to town (Foggia or Manfredonia) for something to eat, or whatever. During the late afternoon, while in town eating lunch with several of my crew members, I was surprised when told by the woman who owned the eatery, that we were scheduled to go to Steyr the following morning. After we finished our meal we returned to our base, I immediately sought our CO and told him what we had heard. He made the statement that if a mission was scheduled to Steyr the next morning it was a surprise to him and he would check it out at Headquarters. That was the last time I ever saw our CO. Later that night, crews and briefings were posted. After morning briefing, crew members were told that the mission was to Steyr.

"I was due to fly on ship #42-31666, called 'MISS LAID.' The ship was so new that the name still had not been painted on the nose. Our ship was flying lead ship in the right 'V' of the lead 'V' of the second wave. We were met with light flak during the first part over enemy territory. Suddenly skies were clear of flak and I knew we were going to be hit by fighters. They came in from the rear knocking out the tail plane in each 'V,' then moving to the next. During the attack, our 'V' was falling farther behind the formation and several times I called to the pilot to bring our 'V' closer to the lead 'V' for mutual protection, but he was unable to do so. During this time planes were being shot down like clay pigeons in a shooting gallery. There were Me-109s, FW-190s, JU-88s, and for the first time, there were some kind of jet fighters (this can be verified by Robert Peterson, waist gunner on my ship).

"The fighters would come swarming in at about 4 o'clock high, make a pass and a plane would be hit and go down. Our plane was hit by two jet fighters making only one pass. The nose section was hit, one engine on fire, and I don't know where else we were hit. The pilot ordered me to go back and check the waist section. Before I could get fully out of the upper turret, he gave the order to bail out. I opened the door to the waist and saw the other gunners getting ready to go. I turned back to the nose hatch when I saw Lt. Mayer was wounded. I helped him on with his chute and shoved him out the nose hatch. The bombardier followed and I went out after him. I saw only one chute when coming down, but was too far away to tell who it was. On landing I was met by a farmer with what happened to be the biggest bore shotgun I have ever seen - more like a cannon than a shotgun. He took me to a small building on his farm, a shed of sorts, where another GI was held, shoved me in and locked the door. I don't remember the other GI's name, he wasn't from the 96th, but we decided to try to escape through a window. We managed to get loose into the fields heading westward for almost 18 hours before being captured by army personnel and then turned over to the Gestapo for questioning.

"The interrogating officer questioning me seemed to be very polite and my answers to all his questions were only my name, rank, and serial number. He was replaced by a higher ranking officer, a Major I believe, and I was vigorously questioned by him. He insisted that I give him information about the Squadron, base, and other pertinent information. He kept asking how I spelled my name. I kept repeating with a double 'N' at the end, and a mistake had been made when my dog tags were repaired. As I am of the Jewish faith, I was really frightened, having heard of atrocities being committed against Jews in Germany.

"I must have convinced him because his attitude changed. I don't know where the Germans got their information, but the interrogator told me more about the 96th and 2nd Bomb Group than I knew. He told me that Peterson was a replacement for Sgt. Rome, who was injured, and that 2nd Lt. S. Perry

Mayer was promoted to 1st Lt. on the morning of the 24th, that his first name was Samuel, and other such items. Hell, I had flown with Lt. Mayer on over 15 missions and he was always called Perry.

"After interrogation, I was put in a cell and soon afterwards was shipped via freight cars to Dulag Luft, going by way of Frankfurt. From Frankfurt we went by box car to Stalag Luft VI where I spent five months before being moved again. This time the whole camp was moved via freight cars and then freighters to a Baltic seaport, where we were herded into box cars. This time, however, I was handcuffed to another POW with about 60 or more people to a 40 capacity car. Finally we came to a halt and then came the horror of our run to a new camp, Stalag Luft IV. We were continually prodded by the bayonets of very young Krugs-Marines with guard dogs snapping at our heels.

"We were interned there until the Russians started their offensive and began moving westward. We could hear the cannons and knew something was due to happen. The guards were beginning to get nervous and jumpy and started treating the POWs with a little more kindness, of which there wasn't much to start with. Finally, orders were given to evacuate the camp and a flurry of activity took place with the POWs making knapsacks out of shirts or anything else that could carry their belongings.

"The POWs were separated into several large groups and took off in different directions for a long walk through the German countryside, almost always heading westward to avoid the advancing Russians. We slept in barns, haystacks, open fields, or anyplace we could bed down to rest. Never in any towns or villages. For over three months of traveling, west, south or north, and westward again. We knew we were close to being liberated.

"The German officers had disappeared. The enlisted German guards gave their pistols, or rifles, to some of the POWs. Through translations, or motions, they tried to make it clear that when we were liberated to be sure to tell our liberators that the goons, or guards, hadn't mistreated us and really weren't such bad guys. BULL! Surprisingly enough, I don't think there were any reprisals to the guards by any of the POWs who had the weapons.

"About two days later we walked across a bridge, over a small river, to be greeted by GIs. Our entire group was then taken to Camp Lucky Strike. We were told the rules of the camp, stripped, deloused, showered and given different clothes. The only thing I had remaining from the day I was shot down was my dog tags.

"When I was shot down I weighted 190 pounds and when we were liberated I was below 125 pounds. There were many POWs that were worse off than myself. At the camp we were fed boned turkey, chicken, egg nogs, milk shakes, anything to put weight back on us. We got fat all right, but all in the wrong place. Anyway, shortly afterwards, some of us were pronounced fit, taken to a seaport, loaded on ships and sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for further physical examinations. I was finally cleared and given a 15-day leave with orders to report to Miami Beach, Florida for rehabilitation and evaluation.

"Upon the end of the war I re-enlisted in the Air Force with the Military Air Transport Group stationed in South Carolina. All during the time I was a POW, as many others, I lived for one day at a time, forgetting many events, places, times, dates, and happenings. To this day there are many blanks in my memory about those days spent in Stalag Luft VI and IV, the long march around Germany avoiding the Russians and the time spent in Camp Lucky Strike. Quite a bit of the above places, and times, were brought back to my memory by my first time reunion of the 2nd Bomb Group in September, 1991, at Wright Patterson Field, Dayton, Ohio."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31459 - "LION'S DEN" - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Thaddeus J. Lyons, 0-1010370, P.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. John N. Wilson, Jr., 0-584588, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. John E. Devereaux, 0-809554, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Robert C. Gamache, 0-682023, B.	(POW)

T/Sgt. Merrill (NMI) Fenn, 31167393, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Henry (NMI) Carrizales, 38365980, L/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Arthur (NMI) Carl, 16144065, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Martin B. Lyons, 17050985, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Joseph P. Gaby, 32518342, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Rowland (NMI) Raymond, 11097876, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of S/Sgt. Joseph P. Gaby, TG on A/C #42-31459, after liberation: "Lt. Gamache and Lt. Devereaux left from the nose, T/Sgt. Fenn from the bomb bay, T/Sgt. Raymond from the waist and I from the tail escape hatch. I believe the pilot, co-pilot, ball gunner and waist gunners were in the plane when it crashed. To my knowledge, the pilot and co-pilot were still in the cockpit.

"I met all other surviving crew members in a German Headquarters except T/Sgt. Raymond, who was shot and stuck in a tree, in his parachute, but he made it OK and is home now.

"While we were waiting to be transferred to a camp, a guard told us that they found our ship and there were five white men and one colored one dead. We were very doubtful that this was our ship because there were only five of us missing. We had a question in our minds about the colored person's body because one of our crew was a dark skinned person who was Spanish.

"S/Sgt. Carl, S/Sgt. Lyons and S/Sgt. Carrizales were hit by fighters while waiting their turn to bail out. I did not see them after I left the ship. I do not know if they were alive when I bailed out."

2nd Lt. Robert C. Gamache, B, on A/C #42-31459. March 12, 1990: "My first mission was to Prato, Italy, and I flew 21 missions in all. My regular co-pilot was Kendrick Reeves and he remained at the base on the day we were shot down, to be checked out as first pilot. John Wilson flew as our co-pilot in place of Reeves.

"The history records are wrong on plane #42-31459. Five men got out. I'm one of them. Joe Gaby, my tail gunner, said to me that he saw Carrizales, Carl, and Lyons all cut down by machine gun fire from 109s as they stood by the waist door contemplating whether to bail out or not. I personally saw my pilot, Thaddeus Lyons, and co-pilot, John Wilson, dead in their seats. The records show that seven chutes were seen to leave the plane but I say that five died in the plane.

"My navigator, 2nd Lt. John Devereaux, and I bailed out after we were sure that the pilot and co-pilot were dead and we were definitely on fire. I was wounded in the neck by flak and received no treatment until Stalag Luft I where Captain Nichols, of England, operated and removed flak fragments. I met Gaby, not wounded; Fenn, flak wound in back of head, and Raymond, very badly wounded with many hits, on the ground in Steyr. So, five of us got out and five did not.

"As I learned over the intercom from Carrizales, we had a large hole in the wing behind No. 3 engine and gas was pouring out in torrents. There is no doubt in my mind that this gas hit the turbo chargers or something electrical. We did have two good minutes, after being hit, to get out, but remember, the pilot and co-pilot were dead so that's why the ball turret and waist gunners were by the waist door trying to decide what the hell to do. I personally did not see an Ju-88s, Me-110s, or Me-210s. Just a s---load of Me-109s and FW-190s. I received a full credit for an Me-109 that a tail gunner called out and was coming past. A going away shot from my younger duck hunting days. It is fully documented on my discharge papers.

"Devereaux and I were in Stalag Luft I together. I spent 30 days in the cooler, for digging tunnels, twice. Weighed 100 pounds, from 170, when liberated by the Russians on May 1, 1945. I never knew that the 96th lost five planes that day.

"To me the worst part of the whole God-damned thing was standing in the chow line getting served the slop they called food! The second worst was the WWI tents that could catch fire from the

barrel stoves. Then the damned mud! Those weren't the good old days. In those days I was so proud to have graduated in the upper third of my class for bombing accuracy. It hurt to have to salvo bombs off the beach at Manfredonia just to kill some fish for the starving Italians.

"After the war I drank beer with Karl Letters. He was a ball turret gunner in the 96th, MIA, 2-24-44 on Bill Thalken's crew - Stalag Luft VI and IV. We became friends. He died in 1975. I went to his funeral, a sad thing in that only five people were there. He did have the American flag. For years I used to go out on February 24th and get drunker than a skunk. My wife couldn't understand why. I have knocked it off since.

"I'm a past commander of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American POWs, life member of the D.A.V., Military Order of the Purple Heart, and French American War Veterans.

"God bless all those guys, dead and alive, in particular, the 2nd Bomb Group."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31640 - "MISS HETTIE" - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. James B. McCord, 0-729046, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Harlan C. Wisner, 0-686295, CP	(POW)
2nd Lt. Allison W. Lunan, 0-809665, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Donald D. Gilmore, 0-682106, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Homer J. Cooley, 35337819, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Saul (NMI) Zafran, 32435742, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. William C. Payne, 38153019, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Maynard D. Tingle, 37403345, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Ralph F. Edwards, 37441209, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt. James O. Gatewood, 37237087, R/O.*	(KIA)

*Died of wounds in Austrian Hospital.

Statement of S/Sgt. William C. Payne, RW, after liberation: "We were attacked by a large force of German fighters as soon as we crossed the Alps. We had no escort. Over an hour later, as we neared Wels, Austria, there had been eight B-17s behind us. The last of the eight, our right wing ship, went down. A fresh formation of 38 FW-190s arrived high on our tails. They split into two formations, dived to our level and attacked our ship from 5:30 to 6:30, level. Everyone from the bomb bay back was hit.

"Our ship was badly shot up, pilot's controls frozen, and we were on fire. An explosion knocked Tingle and myself down. He was screaming in my ear, "Get your chute on, we are bailing out." I saw Gatewood staggering towards us, very bloody, one arm dangling. His chute was under his other arm. One of Tingle's legs was badly torn. I helped him to the waist door, told him to open the door. I snapped Gatewood's chute on, helped him to the door to get out. Our ship was so full of smoke I could not see the tail. Tingle said, 'I can't get the door open.' I opened the door and was outside the door and outside the plane, hanging on the floor with my feet against the wall board on the inside. Tingle and Gatewood were leaning out the door so I could not get back in, so I dropped.

"The next time I saw Tingle, the Germans were dragging him, on a small sled, across the snow. He was suffering from shock and bleeding profusely. The Germans had thrown away his first aid pack. I gave him a shot of morphine from my pack, bandaged his leg, took him to a farmer's home, wrapped him in his parachute and he seemed much better.

"We were taken to a road junction where we were met by a German ambulance and it took me in a car to Wels, Austria, where I met T/Sgt. Cooley, Lt. McCord, and Lt. Gilmore. Gilmore said he had seen Gatewood and Edwards in the hospital in Wels. That night they took us to an airfield where we met Lt. Lunan who said he had seen Lt. Wisner and he was OK. So everyone was accounted for

except S/Sgt. Zafran who came to Stalag Luft III in July or August, 1944 with news that Tingle and Edwards were alive and Gatewood had died, in the hospital in February, 1944."

S/Sgt. Ralph F. Edwards, TG on A/C #42-31460. August 2, 1990: "On the morning of February 24, 1944, we left Italy with one of the largest contingents of heavies from the 15th AF ever assembled, up to that time. I heard later in POW camp Stalag 17B, there were more planes lost than reported by the military. This was based on the number of crewmen picked up all over the countryside. We had no idea of all the targets by both the 15th and 8th Air Forces on that day.

"Our Group was last in the formation of the 15th and we were hit very hard by a very large concentration of enemy fighters. A large number of 17s, including our complete formation of five, were shot down sometime before reaching the target area. I cannot accept the reports that only 17 were lost that day by the 15th AF. Too many conflicting reports from airmen later shot down and interned in 17B seemed to verify this. Many of the planes, including ours, never reached the target. Our left wing was hit in the No. 2 engine area and trailed fire completely behind the plane. Our vertical stabilizer and part of our horizontal stabilizer were shot away. At least one shell, estimated to be a 20mm cannon shell, hit the armor plating in front of me and catapulting me by the tail wheel. I received many pieces of shrapnel in both arms, near and in the elbow. My right arm was hit the worst, in elbow and forearm. We did not wear parachute packs, only the harness. Somehow, with both arms bleeding profusely, I managed to get my pack on my chest and snap it on. Then, crawling to the escape hatch, managed to somehow release it, kick it out, then bail out. I passed out and never regained consciousness until I was near the ground.

"I landed in a forest of tall pines and the chute hung in the trees. I was about 30 or 40 feet from the ground. I managed to free myself from the harness and dropped to the ground in about two feet of snow. Two German soldiers and several civilians were waiting for me, picked me up, then carried me to a house nearby. They stripped me bare and cared for my wounds as best they could. The main artery in my right arm was severed and also the nerves. A tourniquet was put on my arm to stop the blood loss. Shortly after, they dressed me again and took me to a hospital. At this hospital, I was to meet up with several of my crew members. They all presumed I was dead. Not old tough Eddie, I assured them! Our bombardier, Lt. Donald Gilmore, had been in the hospital and carried me inside to the emergency room where a group of Catholic Nuns cleaned my wounds and bandaged them. They had sulfa powder for medication and paper bandages, like tissue paper. Then I was taken to a ward where I met four other members of my crew.

"On the second day, our radio operator, James Gatewood, succumbed to his wounds and buried in a cemetery near the hospital. He had been badly wounded and I believe it was Payne and Tingle that got him out of the plane. Three of us were put in an ambulance three days later and transferred to a prison hospital in Linz, Austria. They were S/Sgt. Saul Zafran, lower turret, Lt. Wisner, our co-pilot, and myself. I seem to remember that Lt. Wisner was a replacement in our crew, his first mission with us. The rest were our regular crew.

"We were there for about three weeks and then Lt. Wisner and myself were sent to Frankfurt to an interrogation center. We were put in solitary confinement for three days and nights, in total darkness. We were given a small amount of food, once a day, and allowed to go the latrine two times daily. From there to Stalag 17B in freezing weather. Stalag 17B was at Krems, Austria, about 60 km west of Vienna. It was a camp for enlisted personnel. The other four crew members: Lt. McCord, Lt. Lunan, T/Sgt. Cooley, and T/Sgt. Payne, I never saw them after I was shot down.

"Conditions at 17B were not much better. No heat, no lights, no running water, and a diet of rutabaga soup and black bread. Thank God for the American Red Cross! We received a parcel, once a week, without which we would likely have starved to death.

"I was one of the lucky ones in the first group of POWs to be repatriated. Several doctors came from Switzerland to the camp at Krems and I was one of the few that was chosen to return home. We left Stalag 17B in August 1944 and after traveling over most of Germany by train, was finally taken by ferry boat from Altenkircin, Germany to Tralleborg, Sweden; there exchanged for German POWs. We then went to Goteborg, Sweden where we boarded the M.S. Gripsolm, a Swedish liner, for home, and arriving in the U.S. September 6, 1944.

"We never were sure how many enemy planes we shot down, but in conversations with Tingle, Zafran, and Wisner, we decided on the approximate number of five. I have only had contact with McCord, Cooley and Gilmore since the war. Lt. Gilmore worked for a phone company in Pennsylvania and every year, on February 24th, he would call me and we would chat about our time in the service. He died 10 years ago. Maynard Tingle died January 1, 1990. I saw Cooley and McCord after the war. They came to visit me. Cooley was on his way to California. Have never heard from his since and do not know his whereabouts.

"The information in the mission report on our plane nosing up and then going into a spin is erroneous. It flew in a circle as Lt. McCord had put it on auto pilot before ordering everyone to bail out."

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-29639 - "SKYWORM" - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Albert D. Byrne, 0-747207, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Ernest (NMI) Davis, 0-680428, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. John W. Carney, 0-674144, N.	(POW)
1st Lt. Jay E. Jones, 0-699307, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Adolph (NMI) Sevruck, 31093932, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. William R. Arm, 32246516, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Milan G. Walter, 35331263, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. John D. Stepp, Jr., 38119049, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Leon J. Hyde, 32131092, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Everett J. Bauman, 36069445, R/O.	(POW)

1st Lt. Albert D. Byrne, P, of A/C #42-29639. April 26, 1996: "February 24th has been a rather eventful day for me in several ways. I entered the military service 24 February 1941, and was hanging in a parachute over enemy territory on the day I was eligible to draw longevity pay, 24 February 1944. I was later released from the military on 24 February.

"On that particular day in 1944, all flight crews in the 2nd Bomb Group entered the pre-flight room for a resume of our scheduled mission. We had no realization that this would be the last of the war for many of us.

"As the briefing officer pointed to the map and indicated our target to be deep in enemy territory, I heard several persons breath low exclamations of apprehension. We were asked if we wanted fighter escort to the target or from the target to home base. Most persons requested escort from the target in case we had disabled bombers, which would be easy prey for enemy fighters. I, for one, requested escort to the target, stating that the enemy would be most likely to concentrate their attack against the loaded bombers in order to protect the target. I was later proven to be correct, much to the chagrin of many persons.

"Our pre-flight of the aircraft and take-off were uneventful. After taking our place in the formation, we started climbing to an altitude of 24,000 feet, and headed north toward Steyr, Austria. The snow covered peaks of the Swiss Alps looked beautiful under our left wing. A few hours later I would be wishing I was walking among them in the safety of the neutral nation of Switzerland.

"As we approached the south border of Austria, we could see many formations of enemy fighters paralleling our course but at a higher altitude and a few miles distant. Within a matter of minutes, a call on the intercom stated that the attack had started. They were diving singly and sometimes doubly on the Squadron on our left. We soon saw several bombers going down, some on fire, taking many men to their deaths. As you know, the pilot must remain at the controls until everyone is out of the plane, which means that some of the pilots would go down with the aircraft, especially when a fire enveloped the plane.

"It was a practice of other planes, not under attack, to count the parachutes from a downed bomber and make an official report of the matter. Several estimates of the number of enemy fighters involved were over 100.

"After the Squadron on our left was depleted, the enemy turned their attention to my Squadron, the 96th. Diving on us high from the rear, they would pass over our Squadron at high speed and then also target the 20th Squadron. At least two went down and crew members parachuted out, pulling their ripcords immediately, which caused them to open nearly in front of us. I was concerned about hitting one of the chutes.

"My gunners were reporting that planes in our Squadron were going down and that we were then out of ammunition. The target was immediately ahead with a considerable amount of flak rising. Suddenly I saw the lead plane on my right, flown by Captain Bill Thalken, slowly bank to the right with smoke coming from the wing. His crew was bailing out. I then realized that our time had finally arrived unless I could make it to the anti-aircraft fire over the target. Enemy fighters would never enter the flak area to attack.

"My gunners informed me that four of them were wounded and we had no means of defense. The Number 4 engine was hit and the prop ran away to a high rpm and could not be feathered. A moment later a thunderous explosion occurred in the cockpit and the co-pilot, Ernie Davis, fell forward against what was left of the instrument panel. The throttles were blown out of my hands and the instrument panel completely destroyed.

"Blood was all over the right side of the cockpit and on the windshield, obscuring my view. I looked at Ernie and as he straightened up I saw a tremendous wound in his right side, his right arm was severed below the shoulder and was hanging by loose skin. The cockpit had a four foot diameter hole in the side, which had apparently been caused by a 20mm cannon shell. Another louder explosion occurred taking the Number 3 engine loose from the nacelle and tilting it at an angle downward. The right wing was torn open, also the gas tank. Fire immediately erupted in that tank and the gunners stated that the flames extended along the fuselage past the tail. I told the engineer, T/Sgt. Adolph Sevruck, to assist the co-pilot out of the seat and out through the bomb bay. I had pulled the salvo cable to open the bomb bay doors and drop the bombs. I then ordered the crew to bail out. The intercom was dead and inoperative but later learned most of the crew was already out of the plane.

"The enemy also had a Ju-88, light twin-engine bomber, firing rockets into the formation and this is what hit Number 3 engine and wing. The plane was attempting to spin to the right and I was desperately holding full left rudder and left aileron to keep it upright for everyone to get out.

"I could not wear a parachute while seated and flying due to space restriction. My chest pack chute was on the floor and I was attempting to locate it with my right hand but keeping the plane upright. I finally hooked my fingers on it under the top turret where it had slid during the aircraft maneuvers. All persons had gone so I had no assistance. I finally strapped my chute to the harness and left my seat; jumping from the bomb bay.

"I felt the rush of cold air and absolute quiet and no aircraft sounds. I delayed opening my chute for about 10,000 feet to get out of the battle area and down to breathable oxygen. I looked downward to see my landing area and to my pleasure it was an open field with a nearby forest. Two German

soldiers, with rifles, were running toward me. The chute oscillated considerably and I landed hard and flat on my back in about 18 inches of snow.

"I slipped out of my harness and ran to a nearby small road toward the forest. When out of sight of my pursuers, I made a running jump into a clump of evergreens, hoping not to leave any footprints for them to follow. I then proceeded through the forest for several miles, seeing no one.

"I was following a clear cut path and rounded another clump of evergreens only to face four people; two soldiers and a man and woman. I immediately turned and ran back down the path. I knew the soldiers would start shooting immediately after rounding the turn so I went to the right. The snow immediately went waist deep and I was trapped. I could only dive under it and start tunneling. Within a minute I heard boots crunching as they kicked the snow from my tunnel. I rolled over on my back to see a hand with a large knife blade in it descending towards my chest.

"I grabbed the wrist with both hands and was pulled upright. The civilian man and I struggled for the blade. One soldier stepped forward and pressed a Luger into my stomach. I released the wrist holding the blade and took one step back. I saw the ferocious gleam in the man's eyes as he swung the blade at my throat. I evaded the blow and shouted to the soldier with the pistol, "You'd better take that blade from him or you will have to shoot me in defense." I learned later none of them spoke English but he got the message. He took the blade and calmed everyone down. When the soldiers saw I was unarmed, they relaxed somewhat and allowed me to rest for a few minutes.

"I was extremely exhausted from running in deep snow for at least two miles. I did not smoke but always carried a pack of Pall Mall cigarettes in my flight clothes. American cigarettes were worth their weight in gold in Europe during the war and I knew someday they would afford me the power to bargain with someone. I decided now was the time to bargain. I had not been searched so I pulled the pack out and offered a cigarette to each person. Their eyes lit up and they thanked me in German as they each took one. They made no effort to take any of my personal possessions, or the cigarettes, and became somewhat friendly. One of them gave me a U.S. Air Force Officer's green overseas cap with Captain's bars on it. I donned it and was escorted about three miles to the small town of Sierning.

"Upon entering the room of temporary interment, whom did I see but Bill Thalken. His first words were, "Where did you get my cap?"

"We were held there for a few days then taken to the Luftwaffe Air Base near Linz, Austria and placed in solitary confinement. It was on this move that I assisted in carrying Lt. Perry Mayer on a stretcher. He was badly wounded and needed medical attention. We left him on a lonely railroad platform with the assurance from the guards that he would be taken on the next train to a hospital. I later learned that Lt. Ernie Davis and T/Sgt. Sevruck had landed near each other and Sevruck had put a tourniquet on Ernie's arm, packed it in snow to stop the bleeding and gave him a shot of morphine.

"At the Air Base we were held in solitary confinement several days and then taken to Dulag Luft near Frankfurt. After several days there, we were put into 40 & 8 box cars, with many other prisoners, who were mainly from the 8th Air Force in England.

"Our train stopped in Berlin just as an air raid sounded. The guards hastened to lie down in the ditches along side the track but we were locked inside the box cars. We peered up at the sky through cracks between the boards and saw the vapor trails of the entire 8th Air Force making the first daylight raid on Berlin. We all had the same thoughts in mind. Had we come all this far in the war to be killed by our own comrades? We knew that railroad Marshalling Yards were sometimes primary targets. Judging by the immense size of the air armada, we knew that if the yards were the target, we did not stand a chance to survive. Some of the prisoners almost broke down emotionally and a few prayers were said. To our utmost relief, the planes passed over us and bombed the city. Thus began our experience of almost 1½ years of imprisonment.

"I made two trips to Europe after the war and visited the old prison camp on the Baltic Sea due north of Berlin, at Barth. On the last trip I rented a car in Frankfurt and drove through the so-called Iron Curtain several times. I went to Yugoslavia to Zagreb, which was one of our targets. I also drove to the site of the air base near Foggia. The runway had been removed but the olive grove where we camped was still there; also the underground caverns and the old Church.

"I went to Sierning, Austria where I chanced to meet one of the men who witnessed my capture and first interment. He was very sociable and invited me to his apartment, where he opened his oldest bottle of wine. We talked until midnight with his daughter acting as interpreter. The next day he went with me to show where I had been captured and introduced me to a soldier who had been a prisoner in Russia. After comparing notes with him in our detailed discussion, I must say that I was glad I was an American prisoner in Germany rather than a German prisoner in Russia."

1st Lt. Jay E. Jones, B, on A/C #42-26939. January 30, 1990: "My last mission was on February 24, 1944, and the target was Steyr, Austria. As I recall, we were just about to line up on the I.P. when we were attacked by the Krauts. Some say they were Me-109s with cannons. We were hit in the No. 3 engine. The nose filled with smoke and so Carney and I bailed out at 22,000 feet. T/Sgt. Sevruck tossed Ernie Davis out the bomb bay. He was hit in the right arm, which doctors removed, and he was repatriated after several months.

"Carney and I landed about 100 yards apart. We were rounded up by a young German lad with an old man. As the boy had a large horse pistol, we went into town with them.

"After various interrogations and train rides, we arrived at Stalag Luft I, Barth, Germany. Al Byrne was already there and we remained there for 14 months.

"In retrospect, they treated us as well as could be expected. Horse meat, lots of potatoes and rutabagas were staples. They weren't eating much better. Red Cross packages helped when they arrived, which was seldom.

"After about three days some guys came around to see if we wanted to join a bridge club or play on the softball team. It amazes me how Americans adjust to conditions so quickly. It had been a long time since I recalled these memories, and I can't get my grandchildren to hear my stories, computers are more exciting. Even my wife has heard the tales too often although she listens if it is not too long.

"The Russians came in half tracks and freed us. We were flown to LaHavre, France. Some fellows went right home, but I went to London for three weeks, having never been there, and then home by boat. Needless to say there are some things left out but it is beginning to bore me after all this time."

S/Sgt. Milan G. Walter, RW, on A/C #42-29639. Milan Walter was preparing a story of his experiences when he was taken ill and died June 1, 1990 after two major surgeries. His wife, Harriet, felt it was important that some of his experiences be told. February 12, 1991: "It seems after a period of time, over 40 years, others are interested in this part of history, so I am glad to share what I have with them. You see, I am interested in genealogy and know how important it is to get the facts of the real life stories correct.

"He did not talk of his adventures much, only occasionally when asked, so I have bits and pieces here in my mind of what happened. Perhaps this article written when he arrived home and visited his Uncle in Hibbing, Minnesota, and the paper there wrote the article that follows. It tells of his thoughts and feelings at that time.

"From a Minnesota newspaper, August 9, 1945.

Among the many young service men who have lived a lifetime in a few years is S/Sgt. Milan G. Walter of Toledo, Ohio, visiting his Uncle and Aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Walter.



T/R - L/R - A. Byrne, E. Davis, J. Carney, J. Jones
 B/R - L/R - A. Sevruck, J. Stepp, E. Spriggs (*), E. Bauman, M. Walter, L. Hyde
 *KIA 3-11-44 - Courtesy - Mrs. Harriet Walter

On an extended furlough after having survived 15 months in a German prison camp, young Walter has gained 30 pounds since his release.

Although extremely reticent and modest, in telling of his experiences, this corner managed to wangle and prod loose some of the highlights of his experiences.

To begin with, Sgt. Walter admits being a member of the 15th Air Force, which was active in three major African and European areas. He wears the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart, and Presidential Citation.

As an armorer on a Flying Fortress, he participated in 15 missions before being shot down over Steyr, Austria, when his flight was pounced on by 150 Messerschmitts. "They always seemed to know when we were coming," the Sgt. revealed wryly.

Captured in a forest, Walter was taken to Stalag VI prison camp in East Prussia. There his body wasted to 110 pounds on a diet of hot water for breakfast, cabbage water for dinner, and a cupful of potatoes for supper. There were variations in that diet. "Had it not been for the Red Cross packages, we couldn't have made it," he confessed gratefully. For amusement at the prison camp, the boys posted on the bulletin boards the menus of the things they were going to eat when they got home. Many of the boys "passed out" when they read those menus, to the amusement of the originators.

News of the war was obtained through a radio built into a concertina. The guards tried to ferret it out and finally succeeded. As the Russians advanced, the prisoners were

taken to Stalag IV in Pomerania and later, marched 500 miles on a diet of a few ounces of bread a day. Many dropped on the roadside and were left behind.

S/Sgt. Walter was liberated on April 26, 1945, by the 415th American Infantry Division.

"A fellow from your city was in the 415th."

Bob Allen was visiting at the home of his Uncle, Paul Ayotte, next door to the Walter residence, when Bob and Milan met again. "I'll say it's a small world," mused Sgt. Walter.

Mrs. Walter continues: "The letter he wrote to his Mom when he was liberated will give you an idea of his feelings. He had not been much of a letter writer recently, but feel this gave a lot of immediate thoughts after his release."

May 6, 1945

Dear Folks:

Hello everyone, well I finally got a chance to write again. Am in American hands now, safe and sound, was liberated on the 26th of April. It sure was a happy day for us. I never knew how good a G.I. looked. I'm telling you it was a pleasure to see our own uniforms after having to look at those God-damned Krauts. Well I'm okay now and getting good food again.

We (I mean the prisoners) were marched all over the damn country, 52 days of it. In that time, we covered nearly 600 miles, but made it, and right now those bastards are paying through the nose for it. Can't say where I am but the main thing is I'm coming home, don't know how soon but we're on our way. We started out on the march, February 6th, and was awfully cold at the time. We had to sleep in barns and when none was to be had, it was out in the open fields. The Krauts moved us out of the camp cause the Russians were getting too close so we were moved West. Came too far West and into American lines so they ran us East and then Southwest trying to hang onto us, but things were closing in so bad they had to leave us go.



S/Sgt. Milan G. Walter - Courtesy Mrs. Harriet Walter

Just heard officially the war is over. I suppose everyone is happy about it. Just got back from a show, wasn't so good. Wished I could write to everyone, but everything is such a hub bub, so give all the regards to most of them for me till I get there personally. When I get home you better have things prepared because we are going to have a blowout what am!

I hope that everything is running smoothly at home. I spose there have been quite a few changes around the "ole" homestead. Yes, I'm afraid the change of scenery is going to be really something. It has been a long time hasn't it? Maybe it is the long distance from home that makes it seem so much longer. Boy, I have ample things to do when I get home, ye Gods, it will take months, in fact. I intend to take quite a vacation and really have a time before I settle down. One thing Mom, I will never miss another of your meals, in fact, I'm going to make up for lost time when it comes to eating. I never knew how much it meant to eat, and eat good. In fact, I never knew just how much the U.S.A. meant to me. I sure have had enough of this European stuff. I guess one has to take the bitter with the sweet to really appreciate the sweet. Well Mom, Dad, and Sis, I'll sign off for now. Don't worry about me because I'm okay and on my way.

See you all soon,
Your loving Son,
Sunny

Mrs. Walter continues: "A lot of his stories were of the humorous nature, of how they tried to make the best of a difficult situation. That was the only way to handle it. And being young, the adventuresome, it was a way of dealing with it."

Sincerely,
Harriet Walter

Major Walter F. Kutschera, Commanding Officer, First Pilot of one of the original crews entering combat in North Africa. September 21, 1990: "Forty-six years have elapsed since the events of February 24, 1944, a day impressed in my memory. Details have faded with time, but I recall many of the overall happenings. This day was important in a personal way for it was my 50th; the final combat effort after a prolonged tour with the 429th Squadron.

"The Squadron had been activated in late 1942, moved overseas in the spring of 1943 and commenced operations in North Africa. My first sortie was the 1st of May. Some crews flew almost every mission and finished the required 50 by early October. The Group Commander, Colonel Rice, designated me as a lead pilot, to take turns with other Squadron Commanders, and Group Headquarters pilots, in flying as Group Leader. Not until February, 1944, was I scheduled for my final mission.

"The day began as usual, with the pre-dawn briefing of the air crews. We were told to expect increasingly determined opposition from enemy fighter aircraft and heavy flak over the target. On the previous day, we had been assigned the same target, at Steyr. The bomber Groups of the 5th Wing, all B-17s, had proceeded en route but cloud formations over the Adriatic Sea became more dense as we flew north, precluding maintenance of a Wing formation and all Groups returned to base. Today we would try again. The weather conditions prevented one B-17 Group from joining us and the B-24 Wings, based to the south of us, were unable to become airborne. This was unfortunate because the strategy was for the B-24s to raid targets in the Balkans and thereby provide a diversion to draw away the enemy fighters from the route to be taken by the B-17s. One B-24 Wing was to follow the 5th Wing to the target but did not appear. Without the B-24s, we had full attention of the German defenders.

"In early 1944, the 15th air Force fighter escort had insufficient range to provide a continuing escort to the bombers on deep penetration. The latter had to rely on the mass firepower of the 50 cal. machine guns concentrated from a tight formation. Straggling aircraft were easily shot down.

"Our vulnerability was increased because of our reduced force. The clouds encountered en route required close formation flying to prevent separation of the Groups. Therefore I placed my Group lead aircraft very close and just below the last aircraft of the preceding Group. Fortunately the first two Group Leaders flew smoothly and precisely, enabling all pilots to hold their positions. With the onset of the enemy attacks, a close formation was my paramount concern. My recollection is that never before did I hold in there so tight and for so long.

"A major requirement of a lead pilot was to fly smoothly with no major changes in altitude or airspeed so that the wing-men could hold their positions. On this day, my whole attention was divided only between the aircraft formation directly ahead and the flight instruments. Guided by the latter, I was able to minimize the difficulty of those pilots who followed. My co-pilot, Bill Cunningham, made changes in the engine power settings as needed. Once the German fighter attacks began, my only source of information about the progress of the air battle around us was from the intercom traffic. The gunners, especially the tail gunner, maintained a disciplined running account and reported each of the bombers shot down behind us. I was apprehensive about our vulnerability when going into Squadron-in-trail for the bombing run, but do not recall any specific losses during this phase. The flak was heavy but little could be done about it. We could not use evasive action. The bombardier needed a stable platform for accurate sighting. Although our aircraft was equipped with the Honeywell autopilot, into which the Norden bombsight could be engaged so that the bombardier could control the flight path on the bomb run, the former functioned in an unreliable manner. I resorted to the PDI, pilot directional indicator, a needle gauge on the instrument panel, which indicated the flight corrections needed by the bombardier to adjust for wind drift. The needle was kept centered by manually flying the aircraft.

"At the end of the bomb run, as the bomb bay doors closed, I began a gradual turn toward our return heading so that the following Squadrons could easily join us by flying a pursuit curve. At this time I caught a glimpse of the air battle ahead. Me-109s were being chased by P-38s, one by one. I am convinced that those of us that survived are indebted to the P-38 pilots. They were not assigned to be our escorts out of the target area, but they heard our radio traffic, indicating we were in deep trouble, and gave us a big assist.

"After landing at our Amendola base, I caught the last command car to headquarters for debriefing. By the time I arrived, there was dismay over the heavy losses we experienced, but there was also consolation that our bombing had been accurate and effective."

1st Lt. John "Jack" Adams, Lead Navigator on the A/C piloted by Major Walter Kutschera. April 13, 1992: "Typical winter day in Italy, cold and damp. Breakfast and briefing before dawn. I learned of a new city, Steyr, Austria, located on the other side of the Alps, on the Enns River, in the Danube River Valley. Due to the number of rough missions, we were limited in the number of planes that we got in the air from the 2nd Bomb Group. But, as we were to have four Groups in the formation, we knew that somebody thought it was an important target.

"Our Squadron, 429th, was the lead for the 2nd Bomb Group, with Major Kutschera commanding and Major Cunningham as his co-pilot. Bill Boyd, and our crew, in "BABY," flew deputy lead.

"Off we go, flying into the morning sun. Then north over the Adriatic Sea to just east of Trieste and then north to Steyr. The weather over the Alps was numbing cold, about minus 50 degrees, but the scenery was out of this world! Snow and towering peaks as far as we could see. This was nice while it lasted. Suddenly the sky was filled with small dots that soon proved to be what seemed like the entire

German Air Force! If this was not enough distraction, the bombardier became upset, afraid that we were lost over the Alps and would not find the target. I told him to keep firing at the Germans and I would point out the target to him in plenty of time, as yet I had never been lost on a mission and didn't plan on starting on this day.

"Three things happened as one: The Ens River showed up with the aircraft plant standing out loud and clear, the German planes pulled out, and the flak became so thick you had trouble seeing the plane on your wing.

"We were supposed to be the last Group of the four B-17 Groups - the 97th, 301st, 99th, and 2nd Bomb Groups - plus a wave of the B-24s that were to be a part of the attack. They did not show up. I know we were the first to hit the target, and I believe we were the only Group to hit the target that day. The report says that the 99th Group was lost in the weather. What happened to the others, I don't know.

"We clobbered the plant and turned south for home. The German planes returned, but not for long. Our P-38s met us and chased the Germans away. All but one, from 12 o'clock low, he was coming fast. All at once I saw two P-38s bearing in on him. The German plane pulled into a stall and the pilot bailed out. Not a shot was fired.

"Back over the Alps, across the tip of Yugoslavia, down the Adriatic Sea to our base, Foggia. The 2nd bomb Group lost 14 planes. A trip of seven hours and 20 minutes, or was it a lifetime?

"For this I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. If anyone should ask what I did for the DFC, you can tell them, "Only what I was trained to do" ... or the truth, I was scared to death."

Note: The Group History shows that the 97th, 301st, followed by the 2nd Bomb Group got to the target in that order. The 325th Fighter Group, P-47s, was to have covered withdrawal but did not appear. A total of 87 B-17s bombed the target at Steyr, dropping 264 tons of bombs. Two other B-17s and three P-38s were lost in this action. Twenty-seven B-17s from the 99th bomb Group became separated from the main force and bombed Fiume, Italy, suffering the loss of one B-17.

2nd. Lt. Roger C. DeClements, CP on the crew of 2nd Lt. William O'Hare, 96th Squadron. February 8, 1991: 'My original crew was 2nd Lt. William M. O'Hare, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Leo W. Zaplatynski, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Woodrow W. Hartsock, Bombardier; S/Sgt. Wilbur Gustafson, U/T; S/Sgt. Nathan W. Lubowski, L/T; Sgt. James J. Henry, R/W; Sgt. Mervyn E. Deibel, L/W; Sgt. Ralph E. Johnson, T/G; and S/Sgt. Richard I. Basehore, R/O.

"February 24, 1944 was a double credit mission so I got credit for my 2nd and 3rd. I was flying as co-pilot on another crew in A/C #777 with Lt. Blomquist, the pilot.

"We went to Styer, Austria and did we take a beating! The flak wasn't too bad but for an hour before we got to the target we were attacked by fighters. About 80 of them.

"Our position was the third Group and we were in the second wave, flying number two position of the second element of the first squadron. There were ten ships behind us and nine of them were shot down by fighters. We were next and if the P-38s hadn't come in, it's a cinch we would have been shot down. I was the co-pilot and since I wasn't flying I just sat and watched the fighters shoot down the planes in number two squadron. In most of the planes, most of the crews parachuted to the ground.

"I saw one fighter come in head on and shoot the pilot and co-pilot and that plane nosed up and dove to the ground. All of my crew except the bombardier, Hartsock, and left waist gunner, James Henry, were in one of the two planes of the number two squadron.

"We flew such a tight formation that when the tail gunner ahead of us shot his guns, the empty shells hit our plane. Some of them broke the front windshields and I thought I was dead and gone when

I heard the crash and found my front windshield broken. The fighters also fired rockets from behind. Our plane had very few holes in it.

"My diary shows that S/Sgt. Henry was declared MIA, April 16, 1944, on a mission to Brasov, Romania, flying in Ship #581, the ship we flew over from the States. He evaded and eventually returned with all the crew, with the exception of the pilot who became a POW.

"So, only two of us finished our 50 missions. I later found that O'Hare, Zaplatynski, Gustafson, and Deibel were captured and imprisoned. Sgts. Nathan Lubowski, Ralph Johnson, and Richard Basehore were killed on the mission of February 24th."

2nd Lt. Woodrow W. Hartsock, B on the crew of Lt. William O'Hare. December 12, 1990: "My part of "BIG WEEK" was very minor. On February 22nd, or 23rd, I flew on a mission to an airfield at Zagreb, Yugoslavia, as the Germans were supposed to be bringing in fighters to that area. It was an easy mission, with little flak, but no fighters and, of course, short. Probably if I had not flown that one I would have been in the one to Steyr, where the Group lost 14 planes.

"I was to Ploesti four times and I imagine it was the first four. They were mostly in April, as I recall. I flew the Russian Shuttle mission. Sgt. Henry was shot down in April, I believe, over Yugoslavia, walked to the coast, was picked up by a C-47 and taken to Bari, Italy. I visited him in May or June. I know O'Hare and Zaplatynski survived. Sgt. Lubowski was killed. I talked to his widow in 1949. I finished my 50 and left Italy July 6, 1944."

2nd Lt. Clarence "Andy" Cowan, B on the crew of Lt. Oliver Thigpen. October 13, 1990: "My regular crew consisted of 1st Lt. Oliver Thigpen, Pilot; 2nd Lt. Harlan C. Wisner, Co-pilot; 2nd Lts. Thurman Comer, Navigator; myself, Bombardier; Sgts. Vitali, U/T; Michael Nimirowski, L/T; J.B. Connors, R/W; Harold Finkelstein, L/W; George A. Kemp, T/G; and Joseph O'Connor, R/O.

"On the mission to Steyr on February 24th I don't recall when we were called or anything of the briefing but recall take-off, forming up and heading up the Adriatic. For some reason I was flying with another crew as bombardier. In reviewing the loading list of the mission I see I was assigned to the crew of 2nd Lt. Herman Lavine, flying #405. Thigpen was flying as co-pilot with Lt. Robert Cleesattel with most of the members of our crew.

"Approaching the coast in the Udine area we could see the vapor trails from the German fighters. As we crossed inland, we were hit. They started on the last Squadron. Our tail gunners were reporting planes going down. Approaching the bomb run most of the planes in the second wave had gone down. I looked over at what I believe was #459 as it was hit. It looked like the whole bottom of the right wing erupted and the fuel just dropped out.

"Just as we left the bomb run, I looked up and saw two airplanes with twin booms. I thought, "God they are even using planes with twin booms." I looked again and saw they were P-38s. At that time everything became quiet. No German fighters were in the area. As I remember, we came back without much incident. After #459 went down, I kept saying to myself, "We are next," but also saying, "They can't get us." One time I remember looking off to my right and saw a 109 come through the formation. I could see the pilot but couldn't determine if he was dead or alive. I also remember that I don't think a shot was fired at him.

"I did not fly the Regensburg on the 25th, but did fly the diversionary raid. We were supposed to bomb the aircraft factory at Salzburg, Austria, but due to bad weather we bombed some harbor in Yugoslavia. Our co-pilot, Lt. Harlan Wisner, flew with another crew which was involved in a mid-air collision with another plane from the Group. He became a POW.

"I completed 51 missions with the last one on 13 April 1944 to Gyor, Hungary. In addition to Wisner, Thurman Comer was shot down on the mission to Gyor, Hungary on the 13th. Oliver Thigpen

was severely wounded on a mission, May 24th, to Atzerdorf, Austria. Sgts. Vitali, Nimirowski, Connors, and Finkelstein, to my knowledge, completed their missions and returned to the United States.

"After returning to the States I was assigned as an instructor at Medland and San Angelo, Texas. I resigned my commission in 1947 and enlisted in the Air Force with the rank of Master Sergeant. I served in several overseas stations: in French Morocco, Spain, and twice on Okinawa. I then retired from the Air Force on 31 August 1964."

T/Sgt. Joseph B. Null, Flight Engineer on the crew of 1st Lt. Henry O'Shea. This crew had been stationed in England with the 327th Squadron, 92nd bomb Group, 8th air Force, prior to transfer to the 2nd Bomb Group. Sgt. Null flew to 12 targets from England. February 20, 1990: "It seems that things were going to be tough for me from the very start. We left Grand Island, Nebraska, to fly to Bangor, Maine. Flying at 8,000 feet we flew into a cloud, hit an updraft that carried us to 23,000 feet with rain, hail, snow, electrical storm, and all instruments haywire. We were in the air 10 hours, off course 200 miles, and only about 200 miles from Grand Island, Nebraska.

"In the 8th air Force we had some tough missions and some "milk runs." I guess my toughest one was January 11, 1944 over Halberstadt, Germany. We lost 60 aircraft. I know we were knocked out over the target, two engines out and we had to fight our way back by ourselves. Lots of holes in the plane, tail gunner and waist gunner hit. I shot over 1,160 rounds of ammunition. Made an emergency landing in Scotland after losing all but one engine.

"Amendola, Italy, February 20, 1944: At 2:15 our mission aborted.

"On February 22, our primary target was Regensburg, Germany. I remember flying over the Alps which seemed to be just a few hundred feet below us. I saw one of the planes peel off and head for the Swiss border as we were going over the Alps. The weather was so bad we had to hit an alternate target. My notes say Peterhausen, Germany, time 7:15 hours. (Note: amended to Olching, Germany.) I can't recall whether it was on this mission or later over Regensburg that we ran into German jet aircraft, but anyway, there were about six or eight of them coming in on our Group at 12:00 o'clock high, made one pass with no damage. I don't remember many fighters jumping us on this mission, but lots of flak.

"On February 23, we flew 1:10 hours - no sortie.

"February 24 was the mission to Steyr, Austria, and it was a pretty good one! They awoke us at 0500 hours, we ate, went to briefing and they told us where we were going. We went to the armory, got our guns, went to the aircraft and got ready for take-off. We had to abort our regular aircraft and pick up another one. Having to rush to catch up with the rest of the Group, I didn't get a chance to clean my guns on the new plane but they test fired okay over the Adriatic where we assembled with the rest of the Group. We didn't have fighter escort and were flying rear Group. Well, before we reached the target, we were jumped by two groups of German fighters, mostly Me-109s. One group approached us at 3:00 o'clock high and the other about 9:00 o'clock high. They didn't come in on us at that position but lined up four or five at a time, on the rear aircraft, coming in and firing from 5:00 o'clock and 6:00 o'clock high and picking off one bomber at a time, starting at the rear of the Group.

"Well, the worst thing happened to me and I'll never forget it. My guns froze up and I wasn't able to fire very much. It was really cold that day, about 65 degrees below zero at that altitude. Anyway, all I could do was to call out fighter locations and when I thought they were going to fire, tell the pilot and co-pilot to "KICK IT" and they would do evasive action to dodge bullets. We were trained to do this in the 8th Air Force. Anyway, things were pretty hot! Planes were being shot down right and left. All the time this was going on I was trying to get my guns working and calling out fighter locations. The rest of the crew were doing a lot of shooting and if anyone tells you that you can't sweat at 65 below, they are crazy, I know. Well, about this time there was a loud explosion in our plane. The

cockpit filled with smoke. I felt something hot on my leg. O'Shea said he had lost his oxygen. Mine was okay, so I came out of the upper turret, unplugged my oxygen, and as my hose was pretty long, I plugged by oxygen into O'Shea's mask and I used the walk-around bottle. I saw the five bottles on the left side of the cockpit had blown, but the other side was okay.

"We dropped our bombs on the target and shortly thereafter, O'Shea said we needed to drop out of formation because of low oxygen. Well, we dropped to approximately 18,000 feet, "expecting the worst," because of "no escort." Luckily two P-38s spotted us and come down to look after us. I guess the good Lord was looking after us that day.

"We made it back to base okay and I wasn't going to mention being hit, but getting out of the plane I couldn't straighten my leg and had to go to the 61st Station Hospital in Foggia.

"Anyway, I heard the next day that O'Shea, and crew, were lost flying the mission to Regensburg, Germany. George Clayton was not one of them, having suffered frost bite on the mission with me and so he had been grounded. I learned one thing on this mission, "NEVER" trust the ground crew or anyone else to clean your guns in combat.

"George Clayton and myself went on to complete our 50 missions, flying for the CO and the lead ship of our Group. Flying with Colonel Rice, who died of a heart attack soon after we reached the States in September 1944; Colonel John D. Ryan, Major Ellis, Colonel Moorman, and Lt. Col. Ainsworth.

"I would like to say that I shot down a Me-109 over Steyr, Austria on April 12, 1944, and that made me feel better about not having to do much the first time over Steyr.

"Well, I don't know if this has helped you much, but I feel better because I have never talked much about my experience over there. I spent 40 years working at General Dynamics, in Forth Worth, and retired in 1987. I saw General Ryan once while working there at G.D. and we talked over old times and the missions we had flown together."

2nd Lt. Richard M. Blomquist was a First Pilot assigned, with crew, to the 96th Bomb Squadron, 1 January 1944. July 1, 1990: "I flew two missions during the period referred to as "BIG WEEK." On 22 February 1944, I flew to Zagreb, Yugoslavia of which I cannot recall any details except it was to be a diversionary raid. The main mission was to go to Regensburg. We were to have bombed an airfield at Graz, Austria to keep fighters away from the main force. Cloud cover prevented bombing Graz so we bombed an airfield at Zagreb as an alternate. My comment in my log book was: "Mission #17, a secondary target." Two days later I can vividly recall the mission to Steyr, Austria. Having been the pilot of the plane and holding formation, there was not a lot of time to see what was going on and, of course, 46 years can effect details as far as memory is concerned.

"We had very aggressive fighters attacking the formation for approximately one hour. Sometimes they even flew through the formation. The tail gunners would have the most vivid recollection, as the enemy fighters that seemed to be the most effective were the twin engine planes firing air-to-air rockets into the formation. The rockets gave them the advantage of staying out of range of the 50 caliber guns and they could pick the bombers off one at a time. If we had not reached the target when we did, do doubt they would have had our plane as well. The plane to which we were flying right wing left the formation and this, I believe, was Lt. Lyons'. As we approached the target, the fighters left us and I can recall only an average amount of flak.

"After dropping our bombs, we turned off the target and saw our fighter cover. This was the most welcome sight, indeed. We felt there was no way we could have returned to base if we had enemy fighters any longer. After seeing the formation on paper, we could only feel that we were very fortunate to be spared. It was evident that we were in plane #777, so we were one of the last two left in the formation. Also, three planes ahead of us were hit and left the formation.

"No crew members were injured on those two missions of "BIG WEEK" nor can I recall any damage to our plane, but our regular bombardier, Lt. Dale Wilkinson, flew as a fill-in the next day to Regensburg, Germany and that plane was shot down (Ed: Involved in mid-air collision). Crew members of our plane claimed several enemy planes shot down but did not remember what the verification was on planes actually shot down.

"I did go on to complete my 50 missions."

2nd Lt. James S. "Jeb" Stewart, N. on the crew of Lt. Blomquist. July 9, 1990: "On the Steyr mission, the Germans put up the strongest opposition that I witnessed on my tour. The German fighters pressed the attack into their own flak. The scene is hard to describe — the sky was full of multi-colored flak, the fighters pressing the attack until you could almost touch the attackers - Ju-88s overhead dropping butterfly bombs through the bomber formation. Bombers and fighters exploding and gun fire from both - the sky was simply the scene of an intense battle. It was a little like a 4th of July display, simply magnified many times.

"We were jumped well before the I.P. and fought through the bomb run. They attacked us from about all angles, making head-on attacks. The floor of the nose of our plane was covered with spent shells from the guns of mine and the bombardiers as we fired at the attacking aircraft. I also recall hearing that the Ju-88s were standing off and firing their rockets through the formation.

"By the time we turned off the target, I had logged 19 planes lost to the formation. Obviously some were damaged and managed to return home. During the bomb run, I remember thinking there was no way we were going to make it through this.

"I know that as we pulled off the target, I called the tail gunner for a count and he replied there were only two left behind us. I told him I knew that, but meant, in the boxes behind us. He replied, "There are no other boxes, they have all been shot down."

"Our original crew from the States were: 2nd Lt. Richard M. Blomquist, P; 2nd Lt. Harper C. Maybee, CP; myself, N; 2nd Lt. Dale E. Wilkinson, B; S/Sgt. Harold A. Troutman, E; S/Sgt. Robert B. Stamps, R/O; and Sgts. Benjamin F. Sheckles, Jr., Carl R. Foster, Ascension Gonzalez, Jr., and Warren D. Oates were gunners. On the mission of the 24th, all of this crew flew the mission with the exception of Lt. Maybee. He was replaced by Lt. Roger DeClements.

"On the following day, Lt. Wilkinson went down with another crew and was a POW. S/Sgt. Gonzalez was shot down while flying with another crew on a mission to Klagenfurt, Austria. All the other members of my original crew flew their 50 missions.

"I probably flew about 20 missions with my original crew and eventually was assigned as the Group navigator. It was while flying as Group Navigator on 6 May 1944 that I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. It was expected that we would have to bomb by Radar. We were leading the 5th Wing and when we reached the target area were able to set up a visual bomb run which was effective. The rest of the Groups bombed by radar.

"I went on to complete my 50 missions and go home. I remained in the Air Force and retired with the rank of Colonel."

T/Sgt. Harold A. Troutman, Flight Engineer on the crew of Lt. Richard Blomquist. December 12, 1990: "During the period of "BIG WEEK," I flew the diversionary raid to Zagreb, Yugoslavia, and then to Steyr, Austria, on February 24, 1944. This mission to Steyr was the most exciting I had flown in all my 50.

"While on the way to the target we were jumped by a large force of enemy fighters of all kinds. They were the most aggressive enemy fighters we had ever encountered and they were determined to stop us at any cost. However, we reached the target after a fight of about an hour during which we

encountered very heavy flak as we approached our objective. Several times during the battle we had doubts about seeing our base again because of the aggressiveness of the enemy fighters.

"It runs in my mind that as we came off the target we had two engines disabled and my oxygen system was out of commission. All of the planes behind us were downed. As we came off the target for home, after dropping our bombs, some P-38s came out of the clouds to our assistance, a sight never so welcome.

"The rest of the mission was uneventful and our home field was a heartening sight as we came in to land. After two days of flying and fighting, we were really exhausted!

"My first mission was to Villaorba, Italy on January 16, 1944. There were eight others to targets in Italy, one to Sofia, Bulgaria, two to Southern France, and one to Budapest, Hungary. The Steyr mission was a double credit.

"After the Steyr and Regensburg missions, the Group needed to get new crews and planes and I did not fly until a mission to Anzio on March 2, 1944. The missions came rapidly after that. I flew three missions to Southern France, two to Ploesti, two to Belgrade, one each to Budapest, Bucharest, Gyor, Fischamend Market, Breslau, Sofia, Wiener Neustadt, Atzerdorf, several in Italy, then the Shuttle to Russia. I ended my tour on a mission to Munich, Germany, the Oberpaffenhofen A/D, on June 13, 1944."

S/Sgt. Robert B. Stamps, R/O on the crew of Lt. Richard Blomquist. August 29, 1990: "I entered the service November 4, 1942, and took my basic training at Cadet Center, San Antonio, Texas. I was assigned to the crew of Lt. Blomquist and arrived overseas on December 19, 1943.

"I flew my first mission January 14, 1944, to Mostar, Yugoslavia. Lt. Lavine was the pilot and Lt. Blomquist was co-pilot. My next three missions were to targets in Italy and then I burned by hand January 23rd and was grounded until February 15th. I flew one more mission to a target in Italy on February 17th and the next was the ill-fated mission to Steyr, Austria on February 24th.

"I flew with my regular crew that day. My recall of what happened so long ago is just not too good. For one thing, I monitored the radio and did not get in on all the intercom conversation.

"I do remember that we picked up enemy fighters before getting to the target, at least 30 minutes or more. Also I remember the fighters were coming in from the rear and that there were probably 14 B-17s behind us to start, and by the time we reached the target we were bringing up the rear, or nearly so. My recollection is that the fighters were first reported at 5 o'clock high, by their vapor trails, and it seemed like some time, five to 15 minutes, before they started their attacks.

"I did not fly the Regensburg mission but flew the diversionary mission to Zara, Yugoslavia on February 25th. I flew the shuttle mission to Russia, my 39th/40th and my 50th/51st to Ploesti on June 23, 1944. I flew with various pilots other than Lt. Blomquist: Lt. Maybee, Lt. Lavine, Lt. Trevathane, Major Cunningham, Lt. Col. Ryan, Lts. Norton, Schlagle, Shuman, Slade, and Sebian. I was discharged September 1, 1945."

1st Lt. John J. Janicek, CP on the crew of 2nd Lt. Leroy P. Rigney. January 30, 1992: "I was flying as co-pilot with Rigney on the mission to Steyr on February 24th. One thing I will always remember is the horizontal stabilizer being blown off Paul Foust's plane. That picture will stay in my mind as long as I live. I was looking at his plane when it happened.

"I didn't fly the Regensburg mission on the 25th but was on the short range mission to Zara. I didn't regret missing the one to Regensburg!

"The month of March was a busy one for our crew. I flew 11 missions that month, most of them in Italy in support of the ground forces although one was to Toulon, France, another to Fischamend

Market, and another to Klagenfurt, Austria. Rigney and the crew went down on the 30th of March on a mission to Sofia. I was sick and Irby was flying with another crew that day.

"I started flying as first pilot not long after Rigney went down. We went back to Steyr on April 2nd and, as I recall, we did not have any losses. I had two trips to Ploesti. Others to Budapest, Hungary; Bucharest, Romania; Fischamend Market, Austria (2nd trip); Brasov, Romania (2); Belgrade, Yugoslavia; Gyor, Hungary; Wiener Neustadt, Austria; Atzersdorf, Austria; Bihac, Yugoslavia; several missions to targets in Italy and finally, three missions to France on May 25, 26 and 27 which were to Lyon, St. Etienne and Avignon.

"The mission to Avignon was my 50th and final mission. I can't remember who else was on my crew. I know we celebrated after it was over. I left most of my memories in Italy. I did retain my mission log so am able to relate some of my experiences to some extent."

REGENSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 151 - FEBRUARY 25, 1944

Colonel Herbert E. Rice led ten long-range planes and dropped 27 tons of GP bombs on the Prufening Aircraft Plant at Regensburg. Due to the tremendous losses of the previous day, the 2nd was only able to provide ten aircraft for the mission. Two Squadrons from the 99th Bomb Group made up the rest of the First Wave with the 301st and 97th Bomb Groups following. The 325th Fighter Group was to provide cover for the withdrawal but was never seen.

Strike photos showed the assigned target, the Final Assembly Shop Building No. 7, was well covered, and with many visible hits on six other buildings. Observers reported that many fires and explosions were visible for many miles from the target.

As on the 24th, the enemy fighter resistance was terrific. It was well that the 2nd was leading the Wing. The brunt of the attack was directed mainly at the other Groups. It was estimated that 100 to 125 enemy fighters participated in the attack and tactics were very similar to the day before. Flak was intense and accurate and the combined resistance resulted in the loss of three B-17s and damage to six others. There were no injuries to returning crews. The 301st Bomb Group lost 11 B-17s in this action.

Plane #42-31416, 20th Squadron, was attacked before the target by three Me-109s, then caught fire and crashed. Four parachutes were seen to open. Plane #42-31679, 49th Squadron and plane #42-38070, 20th Squadron, collided eight minutes after bombs away. Five parachutes were seen to come from #679 and four from #070.

Fortress gunners claims were: Each credited with destruction of a Me-109 were Colonel Elmer J. Rogers, Observer; 1st Lt. Wikko A. Kopra, N; 2nd Lt. Leonard H. Kelly, B, 2nd Bomb Group Headquarters; 2nd Lt. William (NMI) Popoff, B; T/Sgt. Raymond C. Bringolf, UT; S/Sgt. James (NMI) Beranek, TG, 96th Squadron; T/Sgt. Edward M. Hart, UT; T/Sgt. Raymond O. Proto, RO; S/Sgt. Donald (NMI) Malcomson, LT, 429th Squadron. Credited with the probable destruction of a Me-109 was S/Sgt. Cantello H. Strickland, RW, 20th Squadron.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31416 - 20TH SQUADRON

2nd Lt. Lloyd J. Withers, 0-672544, P.	(POW)
Captain Robert E. Arnold, 0-696440, CP.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. Clyde J. Hayden, 0-683240, N.	(KIA)
2nd Lt. Furman M. Scheiderman, 0-739512, B.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Albert J. Segal, 32378586, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Dwight E. Heatwole, 13118033, L/T.	(KIA)
PFC William B. Buchanan, 38473713, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. Robert W. Hiatt, 35662186, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt. John F. Ryan, 20434144, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. James J. Verdi, 13514164, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Edward Wronkoski, CP of A/C #42-38066, after the mission: "I saw three Me-109s come in on the nose of #42-31416 from 12:00 o'clock high. The first two attacked and peeled off. The third came boring in and was firing fiercely. He passed over #416, not over ten feet above him. It was then I could see Lt. Withers fighting the fire that was enveloping the cockpit. The aircraft seemed partially under control. Soon after that, #416 started in a steep dive and after dropping approximately 2,000 feet, it pulled out. We then pulled into his position and I lost sight of the plane."

Statement of Captain Lloyd J. Withers, after liberation: "Our aircraft left the formation over Moosdorf, Germany. T/Sgt. Verdi, T/Sgt. Segal and I bailed out and the aircraft struck the ground near Moosdorf. The aircraft blew up before it struck the ground. In the rear portion, which was the only part not destroyed by fire, were PFC Buchanan, S/Sgt. Hiatt, and S/Sgt. Ryan, in the waist section and tail, dead. Just after the fighter attack, I observed Captain Arnold, sitting in the cockpit, dead.

"2nd Lt. Scheiderman called me just prior to the attack to tell me we were approaching the target. The Germans gave me a description of a body lying some distance from the aircraft and the description could have been no one else in the crew. He is believed to have been fatally injured by 20mm cannon fire. He is buried in a grave near Moosdorf. All those killed are reported buried near Moosdorf, except Lt. Hayden.

"It is not known if S/Sgt. Heatwole bailed out. It was reported that he was fatally injured. I don't know if Lt. Hayden bailed out. A German officer reported that he was taken to a German hospital. He is not buried with the rest of the crew.

"T/Sgt. Verdi bailed out. Just after we landed, we were picked up together by a German patrol. He was shot in the stomach by fragments from a 20mm shell. The last I saw him was at Stalag Luft I."

Note: A German report shows that T/Sgt. Segal was captured and imprisoned. Other reports show he was liberated and returned to the United States.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-31679 - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Freeman D. Storm, 0-800962, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Donald J. Larsen, 0-754362, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. William J. Cook, 0-671288, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Dale E. Wilkinson, 0-688277, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Andrew A. Bonnell, 33301046, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Stephen J. Hannon, 33303465, L/T.	(POW)
Sgt. John L. Honis, 33349005, R/W.	(POW)
Sgt. Richard A. McDaniel, 12172689, L/W.	(KIA)
Sgt. Clyde R. Vaughan, 6917287, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Victor L. Miller, 16507283, R/O.	(KIA)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Donald J. Larsen, CP, after liberation: "I bailed out and others I know were Lt. Storm, Lt. Wilkinson, Lt. Cook and T/Sgt. Bonnell who bailed out the forward hatch with me. Sgt. Honis and Sgt. Hannon bailed out the rear door. Sgt. Vaughan bailed out the tail section, which was broken off.

"The aircraft struck the ground near Landshut, Germany. Sgt. Miller may still have been in the radio room when the plane struck the ground but have no definite knowledge of that and do not know of his condition. Sgt. Miller may have been injured in some way at the time of the collision. No one saw him after the plane was hit. A few minutes before the collision, the bombardier called all members and they all answered, "OK."

**MISSION NUMBER 150
FIRST WAVE
(Squadron 1)**

490 Kutschera			
584 Long		579 Byrd	
(Sq. 3)	845 Miller		(Sq. 2)
403 Surratt	131 Gulik	619 Thayer	416 Withers
527 Magnuson	070 O'Shea	446 Marshall	789 Hillman
			8066 Watkins
613 Rigney			749 Butler
344 Griffith			970* Foust
			425* Smith

**SECOND WAVE
(Sq. 1)**

779 Trevathane			
(Sq. 3)	233 Storm	069 Degan	(Sq. 2)
618* Durney		459* Lyons	666* Thalken
638* Glass	859* Verbruggen	405 Lavine	777 Blomquist
			639* Byrne
			390* Mayfield
870* Moyer			640* McCord
873* Pausha	419* Vandy		571* Meyer

* Missing

"I think Sgt. McDaniel bailed out. I don't know if he was injured before. There was no way of telling after the collision. Someone mentioned that they believed it was Sgt. McDaniel's body they saw being carried away by the Germans."

2nd Lt. Dale E. Wilkinson was the regular Bombardier on the crew of Lt. Blomquist. He had been wounded on a mission to Toulon, France, on February 4th, recovered and flew the mission to Steyr with his regular crew. On the 25th he flew with Lt. Storm in A/C #42-31679. October 1, 1990: "I was the only one of my crew to fly on the 25th to Regensburg. Our Group had been decimated at Steyr and think that our crew (Lt. Blomquist's) was the only one from the 96th to get back from Steyr."

"In any event, I was awakened at three a.m. and was told that I was to fly with Lt. Storm's crew who needed a bombardier and the Group was patching together anything that could fly. This was to be my 20/21 mission. Two mission credits for this target.

"On the Regensburg raid, we encountered heavy fighter opposition about an hour before the target, about the same as the day before at Steyr. I was concerned at the loose formation while under attack. On one pass, a German fighter flew between our ship and the formation and that is when I first suspected that I was not going to get back home.

"The description of the fighter attacks at Steyr jibes with my memory. At Steyr, we were indeed hit an hour before the target by masses of Me-109s and FW-190s, attacking wing-tip to wing-tip and knocking down a B-17 with every pass. The heaviest attacks seemed to come from the rear of the formation and the B-17s were being picked off from back to front. My memory tells me that when the P-38s met us, our plane was the next to go.

"Regensburg was a repeat of the 24th. We were hit by fighter formations a good hour before the target. We bombed Regensburg, and about 20 minutes en route home, I was firing at an incoming fighter, when I heard, and felt, a loud crash aboard our plane and our nose suddenly climbed up and over and I think a loop. We bailed out and I looked at my watch as I floated down; it was 1:20 p.m. I counted 20 or 30 parachutes above me in a line in which the bomber formation had gone. I learned later, on the ground, that as we climbed to fill the vacant number three slot, the number three plane, which had been hit and was dropping back, chewed our plane in two at the waist. The other crew was incensed, claiming that we climbed into them. The two waist gunners of our crew were killed. (Note: left waist gunner and radio operator.)

"We were gathered together on the ground and subsequently taken to prison camps in Germany. Lt. Storm and I ended up at Stalag Luft I near the town of Barth, Pomerania, about 90 miles north of Berlin, on the Baltic coast. The Eighth Air Force used to use our camp as the turning point on some of their 1,000 plane raids on Berlin. You can imagine what a thrilling sight that was from the ground!

"Stalag Luft I had been a prison camp for British officers. When I got there around mid March, there were 5,000 British, many taken at Dunkirk years earlier. A general build-up of American POWs, however, soon enabled the Americans to outnumber the British and take over most of the camp functions. An American Colonel was the ranking senior officer so he took over as Commanding Officer, much to the chagrin of the Brits.

"Our camp was liberated by the Russians around May 1, 1945, and we were held there until the end of the war, about two weeks. Flown out by stripped down B-17s, we went to Camp Lucky Strike near LaHavre, France, and eventually shipped home in early June 1945."

Note: The 301st Bomb Group, following the combined formation of the 2nd and 99th Bomb Groups, was heavily attacked by enemy fighters. It suffered the loss of 11 B-17s. B-24s following the B-17 5th Wing were also attacked by enemy fighters. A total of 33 heavy bombers were lost on this target, on this day.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-38070 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Henry M. O'Shea, 074-3073, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Stanley A. Stohl, 0-677610, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt. Lloyd A. Oster, 0-683301, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt. John J. Conlon, 0-673780, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Richard C. Rivers, 39195528, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt. DeWight C. Wilson, 6972006, L/T.	(POW)

S/Sgt. John A. Lambert, 32254147, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Floyd W. Anthony, 33289968, L/S.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Elwood R. Newton, 33561968, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Clarence E. Moore, 1221421, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Jennings A. Marshall, P of B-17 #446, after the mission: "B-17 #070 was on the left of B-17 #452, Squadron Lead A/C and B-17 #679 was on my left wing. Then #070 slid back out of position, due to a feathered engine, in a right turn. No. 679 came back up and forward and his left horizontal stabilizer hit the nose of #070. The nose was completely knocked off of #070 and the tail of #679. It was out of control, did a wing-over and went down in a tight spiral. No. 070 lost altitude but seemed under control. Neither plane was burning or smoking. My waist left gunner reported four chutes coming out of #070. I did not see either plane crash but it seems both planes must have crashed due to their condition."

S/Sgt. DeWight C. Wilson, Ball Turret Gunner on B-17 #42-38070. February 20, 1990: "We joined the 2nd Bomb Group around the 17th of February and flew three missions: 22 February, Olching, Germany; 24 February, Steyr, Austria; and the 25th. I had flown 18 missions with the 8th Air Force in England. I flew some tough missions in England, but, the one you went down on has to be the toughest.

"On the raid to Regensburg, we were hit by flak over the target and lost two engines on the left side. We could not keep up with the formation and kept dropping back. Fighters were all around us, like bees around honey, and there were several damaged FW-190s.

"As we were dropping back, another B-17 flew under us. They looked like they weren't in any trouble and it almost got by us when we dropped on it, cutting the tail section of the other plane. From what I could make out, the nose of our plane was torn open and the tail gunner of the other plane was in our plane and bailed out from our plane.

"All of the crew bailed out okay and I understand that only four got out of the other aircraft.

"I was not taken prisoner until the following day. At Camp Lucky Strike, after liberation, my pilot, Henry O'Shea, found me and said I was the only one of my crew that he could find. He said the Germans had taken him back to our plane, saw an open chute and thought I had bailed out without one; I always carried an extra chute and oxygen mask. I was with John Lambert in POW camps until the last one.

"On the long march from Stalag Luft IV, my feet gave out and I was unable to walk. I was fortunate in that I was put on a wagon, with others, and pulled by a cow.

"When we got to Moosdorf, Germany, we had no place to stay. Five of us made a home out of boards and blankets and lined it with Red Cross boxes. We lived in that hut until the Americans came and liberated us.

"I have been unable to locate most of my crew so would appreciate any addresses you may have. I did not know the top turret gunner and radio man on the crew this day."

S/Sgt. Elwood R. Newton, T/G on B-17 #42-38070. January 2, 1991: "My memory has become really dim about those events at that time. I think I may have unconsciously shut them out, and it has been 45 years.

"But I do recall my original crew and my missions with the 92nd Bomb Group in England very well. I was not an original member of Lt. O'Shea's crew but was assigned as a replacement in England. My original crew in England, Lt. Daier, pilot, was lost on the first Schweinfurt mission in August, 1943, while I was in the hospital with an eye infection.

"I did not see the crash of the planes, but when it occurred I did not wait for the bail-out orders. I was already wearing my chest pack since I had no expectation of making it back. I had no difficulty exiting the tail section. When the collision occurred, I simply jettisoned the escape hatch and fell out. I did not wait for bail-out orders because I had seen other mid-air collisions where both planes blew up. Of course we had been told to make a delayed jump, opening the chute as near the ground as possible to improve chances of escape. I didn't follow that advice too closely. I suspect I might have been ten feet out of the slip-stream when I pulled the ripcord. I guess I wanted lots of time to worry if it didn't open.

"I recall my capture extremely well. I came down in a tree and hung there, all tangled up, about six feet off the ground. While I was trying to get loose, a German civilian, with about a one-gauge shotgun, appeared and I capitulated in a hurry. I have never seen a shotgun that big, considering that it was pointed straight at me.

"The eye witness reports on our final mission were not very accurate as to the number of men getting out. I remember that quite a few of us were gathered up by the Germans in an old wood-burning bus. The Germans took us to the scene of our aircraft. As I recall, it seemed fairly intact, broken into possibly two large pieces. I don't recall any specific damage to the nose although there must have been. The Germans didn't exactly give us free rein to sight see. While being shuttled around, picking up various members from both crews, we stopped along a hedge row and picked up one member from the other crew who had not survived. Two of us carried the body into the bus and laid it in the aisle for the rest of the trip. I have no idea which member it was nor what happened to the body.

"I never saw much of my crew after Dulag Luft at Frankfurt. Some of the officers probably went to Stalag Luft I or III, and the enlisted may have gone there as orderlies. I am not certain.

"I was first assigned to Stalag Luft VI and transferred to Stalag Luft IV from there. I was involved in the "bayonet run" from the station to Luft IV. This is the worst treatment I ever received while a guest in Germany. Luckily I missed the 80-day hike from there in favor of the eight day, 40 & 8 box car scenic ride. That ride was to Nurnberg. Although it was a miserable trip, it had to be easier than the march that the others made. Part of Luft III had arrived there before us. From there we took a leisurely march to Luft VIIA at Moosdorf. Most of the guards were elderly and knew that the war was about over. So, we were not ill treated that I can recall. I don't know who liberated us for sure at Moosdorf, but at the time there were rumors that it was part of Patton's Army."

1st Lt. Stanley Stohl, CP on Lt. O'Shea's crew. He had flown 13 missions in England, had been checked out as First Pilot and flown as first pilot with the 327th Squadron, 92nd Bomb Group in England. April 19, 1990: "I went overseas with Mike O'Shea's crew to the 8th Air Force, 92nd Bomb Group, England. I was checked out as First Pilot in England, flew two missions and aborted a third. Given a chance, as per my request, to transfer to Italy with my original crew, I chose to do so. My promotion took a long time to catch up to me and my records show my promotion to 1st Lt. was effective February 2, 1944.

"With respect to mission No. 151 and the 2nd paragraph of the Mission report, all is okay, as far as I know, up to the following sentence: "Number 070 was apparently damaged by enemy action for it was out of control partially." NOT SO AT ALL, and I ought to know because I was flying it at the time. The first part of the sentence is okay in that we lost No. 1 engine to flak early in the bomb run and had to feather the prop. In the 2nd Bomb Group, I recall that the S.O.P. was 155 M.P.H. - I.A.S. for the basic flying speed during bombing missions. Our element leader, to my recollection was also the Group leader that day, was not flying anywhere the indicated air speed as he made the right turn and headed for home. I had all the throttle to the fire wall and was losing ground with respect to our position in the formation. Moving out to the left a bit was done in consideration for the planes I knew were behind us.

I never saw plane #679, however, I was fully aware of the collision. Some time later, on the ground, the bombardier/or navigator informed me that the collision caused the No. 2 propeller to fly off and slice through part of the nose section splitting the navigator's table in two.

"As to the partial sentence in the old history - i.e. - "and knocked the nose off #070." NOT SO AT ALL! A few seconds after the collision, Mike O'Shea took over the controls and yelled at me to "get out." I headed for the nose hatch and found the door to be open, and missing, and took a few seconds to glance up at the crawl space toward the nose compartment wondering if Lloyd and John were still there. I saw no one, however, the nose section was still very much in place. A partial break of some size would have caused significant air movement and I don't recall any "wind" at all. I clipped my chest chute on my harness and went out the nose hatch feet first. On the way down, I was wondering with some concern, if the B-17 making tight left turns, and going down, was going to get any closer to me than it already was. I believe it was our plane and the flying pattern was consistent with both No. 1 and No. 2 engines out of commission.

"I was descending by chute in a very smooth manner, almost no swaying and the only discomfort was a shortness of breath early in the jump. As I neared the ground I wondered if I was going to land on the roof of a house at the edge of a very small town. A slight breeze drifted me away from the town, about 100 yards, and I landed in about one foot of snow, bright sun, and went down on my haunches, stood up and never left my feet. I spotted John Conlon across the road from me. We were descending in unison and landed at almost exactly the same time.

"The small town seemed deserted, no people, no dogs, no movement. The inhabitants were probably peeking out their windows at the "invasion." The situation changed abruptly as I noticed one older man exiting the last house on the other side of the road and getting on a bicycle. He was armed with a rifle or shotgun. I took off my chute and harness, was embarrassed to find my wallet in my pocket, kicked a hole in the snow and ditched that. I started to cross the road toward John. We met about the same time that an older male civilian, at a distance of about 100 yards hollering something in German, probably translated to something like, "Hands Up." A conversation between John and I followed: John: "what should we do?" Me: "Take a look behind you and I will tell you what to do."

"We walked out on the road and at this point a number of armed men had us pretty well surrounded. I dropped my Mae West and throat mike to the ground and they were picked up by a German civilian. An interesting event occurred that I recalled over the years. A young lady, age 20 or so, approached me and in perfect English, no accent, said, "Do you have any knives or guns?" I responded, "No," and that subject was not pursued any further. John and I now formed a two "person" parade as we were escorted down the only road toward the middle of town. There were white picket fences along both sides of the road, houses were set back and apart quite a bit, and I'm sure, productive fields behind them. A lot of activity now, women, children, dogs having a field day, so to speak.

"We entered the only significant building in town and found ourselves in a tavern and eventually in a booth; John and myself and two or three other airmen. At this point in time I do not recall their identities. Of our original crew that went overseas to the 92nd Bomb Group, only Wilson and Lambert were this day the only enlisted members of it. The others, listed in the history of the 2nd Bomb Group, I did not know well. We were approached by a large, rotund barkeep, white apron and handle-bar mustache, right out of Hollywood, and I indicated at a round of beer would be very well appreciated. Seeking payment for same, I indicated that I was without funds. The barkeep muttered something under his breath, probably the equivalent of, "dead beat." Things weren't looking too bad at this point. I was enjoying the very tasty beer with a cigarette and considered myself lucky in that things could have been a lot worse. About this time a German civilian approached me and embarrassed me by handing me my wallet with money and contents intact! A well-dressed man approached us, possibly Gestapo, and

indicated we were to get up and get out of the tavern. I was a bit slow and he indicated that the party was over by withdrawing a gun from his pocket.

"All of the above listed events are detailed and accurate, however, the next series of events are a bit hazy in my memory. I wasn't drunk and for the life of me I don't know why. I will give it my best shot, hoping for some conformation.

"Outside the tavern we, about six airmen, boarded an open pickup truck and drove to the site of a downed B-17 that had crashed, but not burned. I believe that it was ours and we were allowed to board it and pick up some personal belongings. From there we went a short distance to another small town and an official (mayor's) office where I gave my name, rank and serial number. There was a lot of "Heil Hitlerling" going on. Outside once more and into a bus with enclosed trailer behind. The entire rig was loaded with German soldiers, Wermacht I believe, plus quite a few American airmen prisoners. The whole rig seemed to be sadly overloaded. A number of stops were made in sequence at such places as crossroads, settlements, etc., and a few German soldiers would get off at each and be replaced by a number of downed airmen getting on. At one point, three others and myself were told to get off the bus and we had the unpleasant task of carrying, using the parachute harness, a dead American back on the bus and laying him on the floor between the seats. Eventually we had two or three deceased aboard plus a number of wounded, not ambulatory.

"At this point I can confirm that O'Shea, Conlon and, of course, myself were accounted for. I believe Oster was there but am not sure of that.

"The bus, with trailer, made the terminal stop at a military base the late afternoon, or early evening, of 2-25-44. I made the assumption that it was a military base, based on the general surroundings plus the presence of some young German officers. The location and name of this base was unknown to me. We were escorted into a large room where, in addition to the guards, a man in a white coat was seated at a table in the front of the room. All wounded prisoners were invited to come forward and have their wounds attended to. The treatment in most cases consisted of the application of what I believe to be a disinfectant and the body area was then covered with paper bandages. My best guess as to the number of American prisoners present would be 30, however, that is only a guess and I could be in considerable error. We spent the night on the floor of a large room after a small ration of food was distributed.

"Early the next morning we found ourselves on a passenger train traveling across Germany. We were advised to keep the shades drawn and not look out. I was seated at a window and managed to peek out a number of times observing some populated areas in considerable state of destruction. We made one stop at a large railway station to transfer trains. On this occasion, while standing on a platform in a group under guard, a German male civilian evidenced his dislike for us by walking through us as if we weren't there. He bumped into a number of American prisoners causing some discomfort to those of us who were wounded and standing, or crouched, in awkward postures. The guards did nothing and the encounter was brief. It did not appear to be a significant threat, however, I did take note of it. While on the train, a German guard presented me with a paper cup of light beer. I do not know if all the American prisoners were so favored.

"The train pulled into a station and I have reason to believe it was Frankfurt-Am-Main. We were marched some distance to a prison camp and I noticed some parts of the city were in flames and lighting up the sky. About ten of us were herded into a small cell with a small window at the far end. I would guess that the dimensions of this cell to be about 7' x 15'. The guards warned us not to open the window as to do so would draw fire from outside guards. The cell door was closed and I found myself at the door end, and in a somewhat favorable position. The air was too warm and soon became foul, however, I got my face against the door crack and got relief while lying in a prone position on the cell floor.

"The next day, 2-27-44, was interrogation day. It was brief in duration and I spent the night alone in a small cell. Early the next morning we were issued small cardboard suitcases containing some toiletry articles, a change of underwear, a few other clothes, etc., plus some food; possibly a Red Cross parcel.

"We boarded a box car, one of many, and off on the next trip by rail. I would guess that our car contained about 20 American POWs and six or seven German guards. The distribution of space was unequal; the German guards in one half the car and we POWs in the other half, the groups separated by a small wood stove. The trip to Stalag Luft I, Barth, Germany took three days and two nights, arriving late in the afternoon of 3-1-44. The march to camp from the rail yard was not far. We were escorted by camp guards along with guard dogs.

"The physical dimensions of each barracks, number of them in each compound and number of compounds, etc., are not well remembered at this time, however, I can do a fair job with regard to the room. I would guess the dimensions at 16' x 24', having seven triple decker bunks, a long storage cabinet under the windows, a long table centrally located with two benches plus a small stove in one corner of the room. A single door was centrally located on the wall opposite the windows; this door opening to a central hall running the length of the barracks. External window shutters were closed and barred at night, however, small sliding doors were located above the windows to provide night ventilation.

"Since I learned to understand the German language in head counting, each morning and night, the number of prisoners fell into the 150 to 170 range per barracks. On that basis I would have to guess the number of large rooms per barracks at eight, plus four small rooms, two at each end of the building. One of the rooms served as a private quarters for the barracks commander, another was used to house the portable privy and a third, sometimes used as a store where one might buy a variety of items using cigarettes as a medium of exchange. Small gardens were permitted during the growing season and on one occasion I remember paying one pack of cigarettes for one medium size bunch of radishes.

"I would guess I would have survived on German rations alone, should that have been necessary. The food issued was in general of the potatoes, turnips, oatmeal, horse meat, etc. variety plus a daily ration of somewhat sour tasting bread, a small percentage of which was sawdust. When the backlog permitted, we were issued one Red Cross parcel per prisoner per week. Sometimes the period extended to two weeks and occasionally longer. Red Cross parcels ran out about two weeks before we were liberated.

"The daytime latrine was confined to a large multi-hole separate building. A horse drawn honey wagon was frequently used to service this unit. A separate building served as a washroom where one might make an effort to keep clothing clean; cold water only. Another small unit provided cold water taps for general toilet use. Personal showers were provided in a separate compound building and at approximately 10-day intervals. One had to move fast; four or five POWs around one shower head that was just a little better than dripping.

"Our everyday routine was confined to keeping our room and ourselves clean and the mind occupied. The small stove did provide cooking possibilities; my specialty was scalloped potatoes. Fuel was in short supply and consisted of black bricks. I would guess the composition was a mixture of tar and coal dust or something along those lines.

"An adjacent compound provided an open field used for sports activities and the daily morning and evening head count. As I recall, a small library was present in an adjacent compound and I used that facility on a few occasions. I played a lot of contract bridge and chess during my interment. Since almost all of the internees were of some rank, we were not required to work for the Germans.

"Quite a few prisoners were engaged in escape attempts at various times and when favorable conditions existed. By far the primary effort was tunneling under ground in an effort to breach the

double barb wire fence surrounding the camp. I understand that the Germans had seismograph type of equipment along the fence lines that did pick up and record the vibrations associated with digging, i.e., tunneling. Since I did not then and do not relish now the idea of becoming a human mole, I did not participate in the effort.

"The last few days of April, 1945 one could hear the distant artillery fire in the East signaling the advance of the Russian offensive that had halted at the Oder River. On or about April 29th, about mid-day, we thought, in error, that the artillery fire was getting much too close. At the sound of a large explosion, most everyone vacated our room at top speed, taking with them an empty tin can, or almost any device that will be useful in digging a personal foxhole.

"I was doing dishes at the time and in a stoical manner I remained at my task. I do not know why I did not move out. A number of explosions followed in sequence signaling the destruction of the radar equipment associated with the nearby flak school. The late afternoon of 4-29-45, a conference was held between the German Kommandant and the POW senior British and American Officers. The Allied senior officers were informed that orders had been received to move the entire camp westward. Our senior officers declined to cooperate or order the camp to move and the Kommandant decided to evacuate all his guards and staff, almost all; several female secretaries remained, and turned the camp over to us. The formal transfer occurred at approximately 1:00 a.m., April 30, 1945. Early morning of the 30th I found myself in a guard tower taking the place of a German guard. I was given that job because I was part of a special MP company organized in the event of a number contingencies. We tried to keep the more adventurous POWs in the camp; the safest place considering the situation. The female secretaries were taken under the wing of our Chaplain and the German guard dogs, confused and disoriented, were shot. A few German guards remained in camp after the turnover; they just drifted around looking a bit apprehensive.

"First contact with the advancing Russians occurred very late on May 1st or 2nd. The first Russian contact, 1st Lt. Alec Nick Karmyzoff, arrived at our camp, and during the days that followed, a number of other Russian officers visited also.

"The U.S. Army Air Force, using B-17 bombers as passenger planes, in conjunction with the airport near Barth, transported the camp American POWs out of Germany. I left the middle of May and landed at the airport near LaHavre, France, and then on to Camp Lucky Strike in preparation for repatriation. I started the POW period at a body weight of about 150 pounds and returned about 10 pounds lighter. I consider myself lucky with all the negative possibilities associated with the experience, no one, literally put a finger on me.

"Embarked for the States and arrived in Boston, Mass. Harbor on or about June 21, 1945. On that day I can vouch for the safety and arrival of the other three officer crew members, 1st Lt. Henry M. O'Shea, 2nd Lt. Lloyd A. Oster, and 2nd Lt. John J. Conlon. Through lack of contact, I could not vouch for any of the enlisted personnel."

"Lt. John "Gill" Nelson was a Pilot with the 20th Squadron. February 16, 1993: "I joined the 2nd bomb Group, 20th Squadron, in September 1943 as a co-pilot on the crew of Lt. Lloyd Withers, a disgruntled one at that. I had been one of 15 pilots selected from our single engine class, 43-F, at Aloe Field, Waco, Texas to be assigned to a, just forming, P-51 outfit.

"The timing was poor. We arrived at Meridian, Mississippi to find the P-51s were not on the field. After a few days wait, we were assigned as co-pilots, either to B-24 or B-17 outfits. We weren't happy! I joined Withers' crew at Rattlesnake Base, Pyote, Texas, while they were in their second phase. I had five weeks or so of orientation of the B-17 before we were shipped out, via Camp Patrick Henry, in a Liberty Ship convoy that took 25 days to reach Casablanca.

"I flew my first combat mission, the morning after I arrived, with a Captain flying his 50th. I had five missions in before Withers' crew, who were in training, had their first mission. Lloyd had an 8mm camera which I took on my first mission. I initially looked upon combat as I would an exciting game. I took a picture, although faint, of a 109 coming in at 3 o'clock. He blasted a hole, with his 20mm cannon, in the radio room. The reality of what we were going to be faced with struck home with an impact and I never took another picture. The first mission, one of the fighter trained pilots that came at the same time I did was shot down. He hardly had a chance to unpack. He avoided becoming a POW by being picked up by Greek patriots. He stopped in at Group in May after spending the winter avoiding capture. I can't remember his name but he was sent home without further combat duty. His adventures, as he related them, would make an interesting story.

"I flew the Steyr and Regensburg missions, February 24th and 25th. I am somewhat hazy about the Steyr mission. I flew in plane #403 as co-pilot with Dewey Surratt as pilot. He flew the next day as my co-pilot on the Regensburg raid. Dewey was another fighter trained pilot. We flew together several times, trading off on pilot, co-pilot responsibilities. No. 403 was leading the Squadron that day, to Steyr, and our main attention was directed to keeping a tight formation. As most of the action took place behind us, it was more like a normal mission except for the heavy flak. Perhaps the trauma of the next day blotted it out.

"Dewey finished his B-17 tour and transferred directly to Colonel McCorkle's 31st Fighter Group of P-51s that were just starting to operate in May, 1944. We went over together and were both accepted by the Colonel. The drawback was he wouldn't give us leave time and I wanted to come home. Dewey didn't feel the same way I did and joined the Group. I haven't heard from him since. He was an excellent pilot.

"The Regensburg raid is unforgettable to me. I had nightmares for months over it, and the emotional pain of seeing my good friends, and tent mates, go down in front of me has never left. The fighters were yellow nosed 109s, some say from Goering's special Group. They came in so close off the left wing that I could see, in that split second, the white scarf and goggles of the pilot whose cannon shot Withers' plane down. They were less than 75 feet away. They had to have been hit themselves by the engineer's twin fifties, but these were the B-17s without the nose turret. They were daring to come in that close at that speed.

"The frustration and helplessness as I watched Lloyd's plane go down was extremely emotional to me. I can now understand how human beings, under tremendous emotional stress, can perform heroic or foolish acts. I actually had the impulse to ram them if they came in again. I remember I struck my fist on the cap of the steering column hard enough to leave an imprint of the nut underneath. Returning to an empty tent and then helping the next day to collect the personal items of my buddies was very difficult.

"I have never heard of any of the fellows again. I knew that four had parachuted from the plane as I asked the tail gunner to count the chutes. I learned through the grapevine that Withers, Verdi, and Segal had survived and were POWs. I also learned that Withers died in an airplane in Alaska after returning to the States.

"Carroll Tucker, the Squadron Navigator, and Gene Sacco, the Squadron Bombardier, both waited several weeks so we could fly our 50th mission together. I believe that was the mission to Turin, Italy, March 29th. I believe that was the mission Ed Wronkoski was shot down. It was no milk run! I had a piece of shrapnel, the size of the last joint in my thumb, that came over my shoulder and lodged in the instrument panel. You knew things were close when particles of the plane's insulation started to float, like feathers, around the cockpit interior. It was an eerie affect. We led the Squadron that day and Wronkoski, I think, was hit by flak as we were over the target. I know the tail gunner said he lost an

engine, that he was dropping back, and was being attacked by fighters. I felt somewhat guilty that the formation couldn't be slowed down enough for him to catch up.

"An added aspect of combat flying, to me, was the terrible bone chilling coldness that we would suffer. I never possessed a heated flying suit. If we had any, the waist gunners received them. At up to 50 degrees below, after several hours, the plane would become a deep freeze. You would be chilled to the bone until you encountered fighters or flak, and then the adrenalin would start flowing and the coldness seemingly disappear. Then in a few minutes, when action stopped and circumstances returned to normal, you would suddenly realize you were cold again. Your nervous system can have a magical effect on your body.

"Hitting the I.P. and turning on the bomb run and seeing the sky ahead peppered with black smoke left from the exploding ack ack shot at the formation in front also made you forget the cold. It was always a terrifying experience, knowing that you had to hold your heading, sometimes up to 10 to 12 minutes, while flying into those exploding cannon shells.

"Many times, to bolster my own courage and also to prevent panic, keep my mind stable and under my command, I would repeat the 23rd Psalm. On several occasions, and Regensburg was one, I held the intercom down. You would start to notice the cold soon after the plane jumped slightly upon bomb release and you turned out of the exploding flak. I didn't think my repeating the 23 Psalm was unique; many prayers were offered on the bomb run.

"I have no idea how one might calculate the odds of a person completing their tour at that particular time. I guess someone could research the particular missions that you participated in, and number of lost planes, and come up with a figure. I feel that I was very fortunate to come home, and have for years felt like I was living on "borrowed time." The odds could be as high as 50-60 to 1 when you count the high losses to Steyr, Regensburg, Wiener Neustadt, Gyor, and the abortive mission to Sofia, Bulgaria, when we lost two at the target and four in the Adriatic from lack of fuel. We made that one by dropping our bombs early and threw all guns and gear out of the plane. One of our engines ran out of gas as we taxied in. It was very close! There were a lot of 'May Day' calls on the radio that day, and we were one. I have learned that the Group lost about 58 planes and crews, during my tour from September, 1943 until my last mission on March 29, 1944. That does not include men killed in planes that made it home nor planes so badly damaged that they were never used again. The crews that went down in the Adriatic on the Sofia raid were all saved, which was a miracle in itself.

"I never picked up a regular crew 'per se.' Several times I took fresh crews in from the States for several missions and their pilot flew as co-pilot with an experienced crew. That was the case of the abortive Sofia mission. It was the only time that a crew lined up and each one came forward, shook my hand and thanked me for getting them home."

Captain Harry Miller, Engineering Officer, 49th Squadron. December 26, 1991: "I certainly will never forget the fateful week in February, 1944. True, I was not a combat crew member but it hit me just as hard.

"I was the Engineering Officer of the 49th Squadron. That week, Steyr and Regensburg, left me nothing in the way of airplanes, and our Squadron, with almost no combat crews. One day, NONE of the seven planes we sent out returned. The next day we sent out another seven and only two returned. We, as a Squadron, were out of business. I felt very ashamed at being non-operational.

"We were all shocked! As I drove around to those empty hardstands, I would try to comfort the ground crews that were standing, literally crying, over the lose of their planes. We lost some that we had maintained since first starting out in Africa nine months earlier. One called "ACHING BACK," #638, was very near 100 missions. The crews were essentially the first of many replacement crews so we ground people were not as acquainted with them, as with our original crews that had, by then,

finished their tour. We were stunned by the loss of these planes and men, but loss of the old, original planes hit us the hardest. We knew them bolt by bolt and now they had been taken away from us. I think we hated Hitler more that day than at any time during the war.

"Very quickly they began to ship in replacement planes and crews. We were essentially a training Squadron for a few weeks. I flew a number of times checking out the flight engineers and pilots. A number of these crews had been trained in B-24s and were very irate that anyone could be so cruel as to switch them to those old, outdated B-17s. They were in no mood to learn anything about the Fortress and that made our job very difficult. We certainly could hear no slandering remarks about the pride of the Air Force so it was a tense situation for awhile.

"Long before those Liberator boys completed their 50, they were 100% converted and thanked God for the change. They did a good job and we almost forgave them for coming from B-24s."

Sgt. James Robert Harris was the lead parachute Rigger in the 96th Squadron. He was from Ashton, Idaho, and returned there after the war. We met again at a reunion in Seattle, Washington, and then began corresponding by letter and telephone. Naturally we talked of our times in North Africa and Italy. At one reunion in Norfolk, VA, one of the officers from the 96th Squadron recognized him from those early days. This officer, and his crew, had been shot down, I believe, on the Steyr mission. They all parachuted safely, were taken prisoner, and survived. This officer introduced James as having saved his life, and many others of the 96th that had been shot down and successfully survived a prison camp. James was given a standing ovation and, am sure, was proud, and thankful, that his duties had been instrumental in saving the lives of his comrades.

GROUP FORMATION MISSION NUMBER 151		
	452 Rice	
070* O'Shea		416* Withers
	8066 Watkins	
458 Degan		837 Nelson
	466 Marshall	
679* Storm		527 Magnuson
	490 Frederick	
* Missing		

ZARA, YUGOSLAVIA - MISSION NO. 152 - FEBRUARY 25, 1944

This diversionary mission was planned for the short range bombers to attack the Aircraft Factory at Klagenfurt, Austria. The Group proceeding the 2nd turned back so the Group turned back also,

having only nine planes remaining. Eight others had aborted due to mechanical problems. There were 36 tons of 500-lb. GP bombs dropped on shipping and harbor installations with limited results. Strike photos showed some hits on military installations, the residential area, and many fell in the water. Two aircraft that were early returns also dropped their bombs on this target. There was no flak and no encounters with enemy aircraft.

Karl Affenzeller, a historical researcher from the town of Freistadt, Austria furnished the following information regarding a German pilot, Lt. Alfred Hammer, Squadron Leader (Staffelfuher) of 6./JG53 based in Sierning, near Vienna, Austria. Lt. Hammer flew a Me-109 G-6, Serial #440190, Yellow 1. His total number of air victories at the end of WW II were 26.

Lt. Hammer reports: "February 24, 1944, shortly after 12:00 o'clock, the II./JG53 was put into alert, after a unit of Fortress-planes had been reported approaching Linz-the raid was again aimed at the factories at Steyr.

"We had again started, after an American bomber unit approaching Linz had been announced. I attacked this unit from a hight of 8.000 meters, and when I was approximately 200 meters behind one of the Pulks I was hit by the defense fire of the Fortress. A detonator exploded inside the cabin in front of my right leg. As a defending action, I turned the plane rapidly downwards and at first I thought that my plane was no more steerable so that I had to leave. As a first reaction to that, I dropped the roof of my cabin. Because of my hight I still had enough time for reflection my actions, and so I tried to find out my plane was still steerable. Thus I saw that I could perfectly reduce speed and was still flying at 6.000 meters above the ground. Then I noticed quite a lot of blood poured out of my right leg so that I could not think of continuing the flight. Instead of that I had to find a way of returning safely. My first thought, of course, to fly back to Sierning. But as my right leg began to hurt intensely, I decided to land in Linz. From there I was taken to Wels and hospitalized.

"Meanwhile the aerial battle was extended further southwards, near lake Attersea, Uffz. Schrubba, from the 4th Squadron (4./JG53) was hit by the defense fire of a B-17 and had to parachute although being injured. Yet another loss hit the 4./JG53. Ogefr. Traugott Sturk was hit by the defense fire of a B-24 near Straubing and killed when his plane crashed at Wiesenfelden, around 15 kilometers south of Straubing. The JG53 attacked the



T/R - L/R - H. Troutman - C. Foster - R. Stamps - W. Oates
- Unknown - A. Gonzalez

B/R - L/R - R. Blomquist - H. Maybee - J. Stewart - D. Wilkinson
(Courtesy - J. Stewart)

enemy planes also over the Alps, and at 1:05 p.m., S/Sgt. Rollwage shot down a B-17 at Gmund, north of lake Millstadin Carinthia. The Stafelfuhrer 5./JG53, Wilhelm Esser, was successful in downing a B-17.

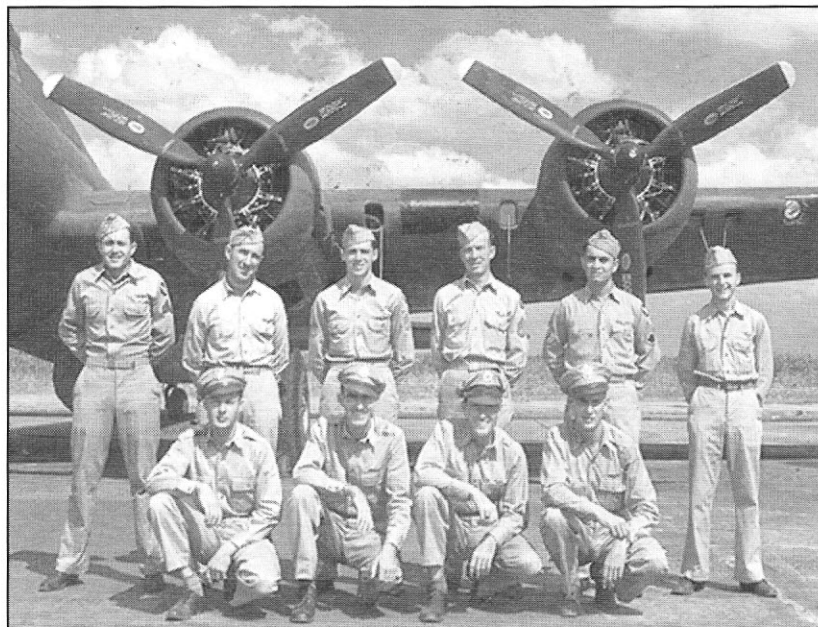
"All in all, the 15th Air Force reported a loss of 16 B-17 and 4 P-38 so that II./JG53 had obviously downed several further planes. In the course of this aerial battle, the group had completely scattered so that the planes returned to Sierning in small groups or single between 1:30 and 2:00 p.m."

At the conclusion of "ARGUMENT," the 15th Air Force had suffered the loss of 97 B-17s and B-24s, plus nine fighters. This did not include aircraft that returned so badly damaged that they were not salvageable. The 2nd Bomb Group lost 18 B-17s missing, with crews totaling 180 men. After hostilities had ended, it was found that 47 of these men had lost their lives and many more were wounded. Twenty-eight returning planes had been damaged and 12 returning crewmen had been wounded.

On D-Day, the Allied air forces controlled the air over the invasion beaches. It would be impossible to estimate the number of lives, ships and equipment lost had the German Air Force been able to mount an offensive.



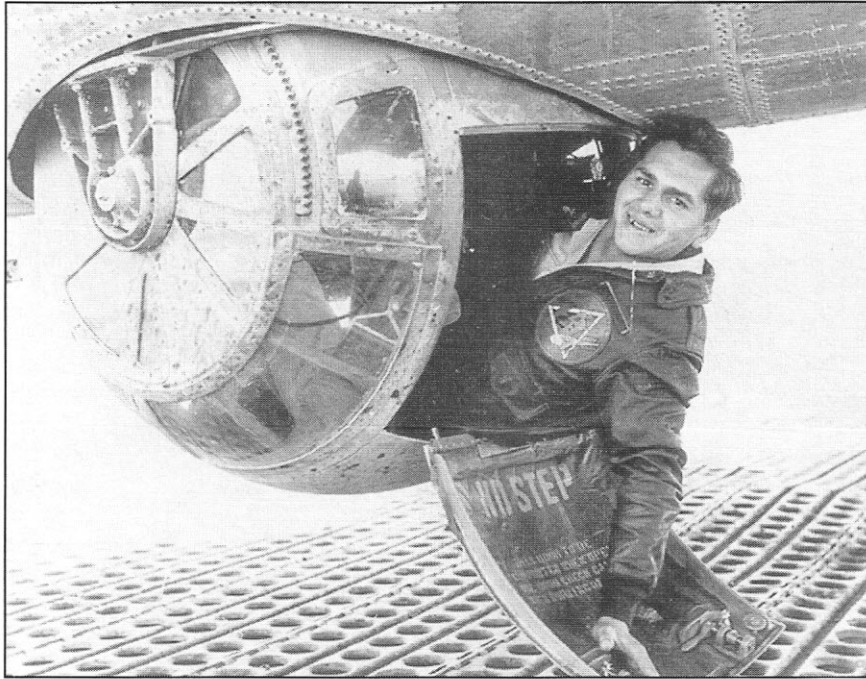
T/R - L/R - P. Foust (*), J. Coppinger, unknown, K. Mork
B/R - L/R - J. Clark (**), C. Harvey, C. O'Leary, O. Beene, S. Riccio, D. Hammond
* KIA — ** Died on Forced march. (Courtesy - R. Peterson)



T/R - L/R - L. Lani, W. Nies (*), J. Vinson, E. Nelson,
C. Bolt, R. Colihan
B/R - L/R - E. Nunnery, H. Scarborough, E. Ralph, W. Lins
* Killed by German Guard in POW Camp
(Courtesy - C. Bolt)



T/R - L/R - T. Comer, O. Thigpen, H. Wisner, C. Cowan
B/R - L/R - J. O'Connor, L. Vitali, M. Nimirowski, J. Connors,
H. Finkelstein, G. Kemp - (Courtesy - M. Nimirowski)



S/Sgt. Michael Nimirowski - (Courtesy - M. Nimirowski)



Lt. Clarence A. Cowan - (Courtesy - Clarence A. Cowan)



A/C #42-97152 - Missing 3-29-44
 Crew: E. Wronkoski, F. Sanvito, R. Zeugin, N. Stockstill, F. High
 M. LaRouche, G. Lawrence, D. Genter, E. Lipsett, D. Weiss
 (Courtesy - R. Odegard)



T/R - L/R - H. Cooley, S. Zafran, J. Gatewood (*), R. Edwards
 B/R - L/R - J. McCord, A. Keller, A. Lunan, D. Gilmore
 * KIA - (Courtesy - R. Edwards)



Window - J. Henry; Kneeling - N. Lubowski (*)
 L/R - R. Johnson (*), M. Deibel, W. O'Hare, R. Basehore (*),
 L. Zaplatynski, W. Gustafson, R. DeClements, W. Hartsock
 (*) KIA (Courtesy - W. Hartsock)



T/R - L/R - R. Irby, L. Rigney (*), J. Janicek, W. Mitchell (*)
 B/R - L/R - O. Buechner (*), W. Corbin (*), R. Gilbert (*),
 A. Barrow (*), M. Maddox (*)
 (*) KIA (Courtesy - R. Irby)



T/R - L/R - R. Sykes, F. Hoskins, J. Weaver, D. Scott, H. Kronenberg,
W. Tucker
B/R - L/R - R. Cleesattel, C. Dicksen, G. Crank
(Courtesy - H. Kronenberg)



L/R Colonel Richard Abbey - Lt. Col. Bivins - Colonel Paul Cullen, 2nd BG CO, -
Major Lewis Leibel - 16 March 45/22 May 45 (Photo Section)