

16

Operations: December, 1944

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 321 - DECEMBER 2, 1944
Forty-one aircraft took off with 40 aircraft dropping their bombs on the Marshalling Yards at Blechhammer. One aircraft attacked the Marshalling Yards at Czelldomolk and one aircraft, that dropped part of its load on Blechhammer, dropped four bombs on Sarvar, Hungary. A total of 402, 500-lb RDX bombs were dropped on these three targets. The bombing at Blechhammer was done by PFF with unobserved results. Bombing on the other targets was done visually with good results at Czelldomolk.

Flak at Blechhammer was moderate to intense and accurate resulting in the death of S/Sgt. Joseph Lipczynski, Upper Turret Gunner of the 429th Squadron. S/Sgt. George W. Faulkner, Left Waist Gunner of the 20th Squadron, was slightly wounded.

B-17 #44-6456, 20th Squadron, was reported missing. Crew members were:

2nd Lt.	John J. Hickey, 0-1540359, P.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Warren L. Miller, 0-737201, CP.	(RET)
1st Lt.	Robert Sullivan, 0-673643, N.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Richard E. DeNeut, 0-2071437, B.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Charles E. Goff, 16131225, U/T.	(RET)
Sgt.	Morton L. Klauber, 12185021, L/T.	(RET)
Sgt.	Joseph W. MacMillan, 11054392, R/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Bernard D. Chessir, 37071494, L/W.	(RET)
Sgt.	Junior C. Turknnett, 18190263, T/G.	(RET)
Sgt.	Angelo Collis, 19073597, R/O.	(RET)

B-17 #44-6456 was hit by flak over Blechhammer. With No. 2 engine out, prop windmilling, No. 3 engine burning, interphone and oxygen system out, and control cables cut, the pilot crash landed the aircraft ten minutes behind the Russian lines. Sgt. Morton L. Klauber suffered a slight head injury as a result of the crash landing. The crew was returned to Bari, Italy on December 10th and returned to Base on December 11, 1944.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 322 - DECEMBER 3, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off and 23 aircraft dropped 183, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Southwest Goods Section in Vienna. Bombing was by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight to intense with fair accuracy. Four aircraft were early returns and one aircraft crashed on takeoff.

B-17 #44-6632, 20th Squadron, crash landed after take-off, 12 miles south of the field. No. 1 and No. 3 engines caught fire as the plane left the runway. Crew members were:

1st Lt. K. Pilger, P.
 Lt. Col. Luther Bivins, CP.
 2nd Lt. D. H. Johnson, N, injured
 1st Lt. A. K. Benner, B., injured
 T/Sgt. J. W. Kelly, U/T.
 Sgt. B. A. Lennon, B/T.
 S/Sgt. G. R. Carlton, R/W.
 S/Sgt. G. D. MacDonald, L/W, injured
 S/Sgt. R. R. Taylor, T/G.
 T/Sgt. J. J. Splitek, R/O.

LINZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 323 - DECEMBER 3, 1944

This was a Pathfinder, "Lone Wolf," mission. Four aircraft took off at 0808 hours. Two aircraft returned early. At 1130-1139 hours, two aircraft dropped 4 tons of 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Industrial Area of Linz. Bombing was by PFF with unobserved results. One Me-109 was reported seen at 1025 hours but did not attack. Flak at the target was heavy, moderate, and inaccurate.

B-17 #44-8381, 96th Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. William G. Pepperman is reported missing with no particulars as to reason.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - A/C #44-8381 - 96TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	William G. Pepperman, 0-758376, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Charles O. Dewey, 0-776248, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Howard N. Kresge, Jr., 0-2057954, N.	(POW)
1st Lt.	William L. Torske, 0-761317, B.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	James J. Teske, 0-723724, RN.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Ernest F. Walker, 18048700, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	James J. Johnson, 16010066, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Alva L. Flowers, 15339227, L/W. 20th Squadron.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Budd C. Argyle, 39919628, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	James B. Dodge, Jr., 19112475, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of S/Sgt. James J. Johnson, RW, after liberation: "All the crew bailed out successfully. Lt. Pepperman, Lt. Dewey, Lt. Torske, T/Sgt. Walker, T/Sgt. Dodge, and S/Sgt. Argyle were with me in Stalag Luft I together.

"I saw S/Sgt. Flowers, after bailing out, at a German Army Hospital near Linz, Austria. He had a broken leg. T/Sgt. Dodge had a sprained ankle from the jump. T/Sgt. Walker had suffered a slight head injury from flying glass."

BROD, YUGOSLAVIA - MISSION NO. 324 - DECEMBER 6, 1944

Twenty-nine aircraft took off at 1006 hours to bomb a Highway Bridge at Brod. They returned to base at 1555 hours without bombing, due to weather. All bombs were jettisoned. No credit was given for the mission.

ZAGREB, YUGOSLAVIA - MISSION NO. 325 - DECEMBER 6, 1944

Fourteen aircraft took off at 0650 hours to bomb the Marshalling Yards at Zagreb. One aircraft crashed on take-off and one was an early return. The other 12 aborted the mission due to weather and returned their bombs.

B-17 #42-31682, 96th Squadron, crashed and burned on take-off killing all ten crew members. The crew consisted of: 2nd Lt. Eric J. Zachrisson, P; 2nd Lt. Harold Beall, CP; 2nd Lt. Edward E. Quimby, Jr., N; F/O John M. Burch, B; T/Sgt. John P. Harlan, UT; S/Sgt. Thomas S. Barton, LT; Sgt. Lloyd O. Terry, RW; Sgt. Arthur R. Dixon, LW; Sgt. Cornelius J. Reilly, TG; and T/Sgt. Daniel P. Soltis, RO.

SALZBURG, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 326 - DECEMBER 7, 1944

Three aircraft took off at 0139 hours on a "Lone Wolf" mission to bomb the Marshalling Yards at Salzburg. Two aircraft dropped 20, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the primary target and one aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt, Austria. Bombing was by PFF and flak at the primary target was described as heavy, slight, and inaccurate.

B-17, #42-97652, 20th Squadron is reported missing.

The following statement was issued by Captain George B. Sweeney, Investigation Officer of the 20th Squadron.

B-17, #42-97652 was one of three Pathfinder aircraft on a mission to Salzburg M/Y, Austria, on 7 December 1944. Each aircraft was to bomb the target singly. One of the aircraft bombed the primary target and another bombed the first alternate, Klagenfurt, Austria. It is presumed that B-17 #42-07652 bombed the primary target. The one aircraft bombing the primary target and returning to base reported the flak as slight, inaccurate as to altitude and deflection, and of a heavy type. No enemy aircraft were observed during this mission.

At 0615 hours, the aircraft that bombed the first alternate target received a message from a B-17 that stated it had hit a target of opportunity by Pathfinder methods and bombs were away at 0433 hours. The call sign letters from this aircraft, as stated by the radio operator receiving the message, were "XAA," but the radio operator could not be sure as the reception conditions were poor. The call sign letters of B-17 #42-97652 were "XAK-U." No bombs away signal was received at the base as coming from B-17 #42-97652.

MISSING AIRCREW REPORT - A/C #42-97652 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Isaac C. Pederson, 0-761757, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Robert D. Draper, 0-558840, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Frank C. Madill, 0-2058435, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Gildo F. M. Phillips, 0-722604, B.	(EVADED)
1st Lt.	James P. Doty, 0-793217, RN.	(EVADED)
T/Sgt.	James F. Miller, 34671710, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Anthony J. Pope, 32875468, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Morris H. Miller, 37567629, L/W.	(EVADED)
S/Sgt.	Charles W. Stewart, 39213765, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Hubert Y. Simerson, 14190048, R/O.	(EVADED)

Statement of 1st Lt. James P. Doty, January 5, 1945, after evading and return to Allied control: "The bombardier was the last to leave the ship that I know of. I saw the engineer leave the ship and believe the pilot and navigator were the only ones in the ship when I left. I also believe the ship was empty from radio room to tail. The only one seen by me on the ground was the radio operator who was left in a Partisans doctor's hands.

"My knowledge of crew members not returned: Lt. Pederson, Lt. Madill, and S/Sgt. Stewart, unknown; Lt. Draper, believed bailed out; S/Sgt. Simerson, left with Partisans; and T/Sgt. Miller and S/Sgt. Pope were seen bailing out."

2nd Lt. Frank C. Madill was the regular Navigator on the crew of Lt. Warren E. Newhouse. He was flying as a replacement on the 7th of December 1944. May 17, 1992: "Gildo Phillips, our regular Bombardier, and I were flying with a special crew that fateful night. We were flying one of those special night-time missions, sometimes called "Lone Wolf" missions. We flew one plane at a time, about half an hour apart. That night we were to hit the railroad complex at Salzburg, Austria. We were sort of an all-star crew. A Lt. Pederson, from the Salt Lake area, was pilot. A Lt. Draper, from southwestern Michigan, was our co-pilot. Lt. Draper was normally a first pilot on another crew. I believe our 'Mickey' operator was a Lt. Doty. In our night missions, a 'Mickey' operator flew in place of a belly turret gunner. My job, as Navigator, was to see that the pilot got to the target area at a particular time. Our 'Mickey' operator then took over, guided the plane through the final leg, and when possible (weather), would let the bombardier do the final drop. I honestly can't remember if Lt. Doty or Lt. Phillips made the final 'bombs away' switch. We were roughly a half hour behind one plane and half an hour ahead of the rest.

"As soon as we dropped our bombs we headed for home. It was then after midnight and we were flying home on the 7th of December, a day easy to remember. On the way, we were either hit by flak or simply developed engine failure. At roughly 0500 we were given the 'abandon ship' order. Gildo got out right away. I had trouble getting the leg straps of my parachute harness strapped to my legs. I finally got one strap secured. I walked to the midsection of the plane and jumped out just ahead of the two pilots. We were probably 10/15,000 feet high. As I floated downward, I could see the morning was dawning but there was a cloud cover beneath us. I broke through the clouds at nearly treetop level. I was unable to avoid the last tree which caught my parachute and somewhat broke my fall. For about ten minutes I just curled up in a ball in my parachute, rested and caught my breath.

"I was just north of Zagreb (Croatia), Yugoslavia. Some Croatian farmers found me and took me to their farmhouse. Later that day some 'Ustachi' soldiers captured me. I thought I was being rescued. They took me to a German unit where I was 'deloused' and sent to Frankfurt for the usual interrogation.

"After a week of solitary confinement, and interrogation, I was shipped to Stalag Luft I on the Baltic Sea. There I met Pederson, Draper, and one of the enlisted crew members whom I had never known. My POW number was 6672.

"We were freed in May 1945 and sent home, (usual stories).

"Last year (1991), Gildo Phillips and I got together for a day of reminiscing after 47 years."

2nd Lt. Gildo Phillips was a member of the 20th Squadron and the original Bombardier on the crew of Lt. Warren E. Newhouse. August 6, 1993: "I was part of a mixed crew flying a night mission December 7, 1944, to bomb Marshalling Yards at Salzburg, Austria. Frank Madill and I were the only original members of our crew from the United States on the mission that night. Frank was our navigator. We kept in close touch over the years and recently discussed the mission in some detail.

"It is my opinion that the only remaining person in the aircraft, when I left by way of the right waist door, was 1st Lt. Pederson, pilot. Frank said he left the nose right after I did and jumped through the bomb bay. I assumed he was still struggling to snap on his leg strap. I stayed and got one strapped but was having trouble getting the other snapped. We had received the last call from Pederson and Frank motioned me to leave. I had never intended to leave by the nose hatch and neither did Frank.

"I took off toward the rear, checked the pilot but saw no co-pilot. I passed the top gunner post - empty. The radio position was empty as was the 'Mickey' spot. Naturally it was a quick trip and I could have missed someone. In the waist was one waist gunner, Miller. He told me that the tail gunner had gotten out. Not seeing the other waist gunner, I assumed he had already bailed out. Not being overly brave, when Miller was stalling, I knew he and I were in the same frame of mind, but self preservation

prevailed and I was going to push him out but it wasn't necessary. I sat in the door, legs dangling. The plane lurched and I bailed. So it is my assumption that either Frank or I were the last prior to Pederson's leaving. I can't imagine his missing the two of us in the waist and not coming back to bail there, so it is possible that he got out before me.

"Frank bailed with only one leg strap snapped. We both had a good belly laugh about the fact that we both landed in a tree.

"After getting out of the tree, to the ground, I looked up to see if it was possible to remove the parachute, and saw my G.I. boots tied to the parachute harness. I returned to retrieve them knowing the electrical boots I wore were not good enough for traveling. Hearing the bark of dogs, the task had to be quick. Reaching the ground made the dogs seem closer, so I ran. When exhausted, the barking less ominous, and noticing a small cave, I crawled in to rest and collect myself. I changed into the G.I. boots, opened the escape pack, and took out the compass to determine a southerly direction. Proceeding cautiously and avoiding over exposure, I walked until dark. To my surprise, I walked into a group of people coming from, what appeared to be, a church. There was nothing to do but bluff. Some of them greeted me and I mumbled to those who did. So, until I reached a wooded area in which it was impossible to proceed, without daylight, I made a bed of limbs, popped the float vest which I still had on, and tried to get some sleep, lying on the vest. I soon woke up cold. I began to exercise, and when warm, fell asleep again. This series continued until I could see enough to proceed again.

"I now thought about what those people must have thought seeing a hulk walking toward them in a flying helmet and orange vest. I laughed, relaxed and suddenly realized I was walking toward a house, heard noises, and dropped behind a bush. A boy, about five years of age, appeared, did his morning call to nature, and returned to the house. It was 'be more alert' time. That made progress slow all day.

"Just before dark, I noticed a shed ahead, looked all around. The only thing puzzling was a post with something on it. I went to see and saw a religious plaque. You can bet I prayed more sincerely than ever. In the shed was some lumber from which I fashioned a sleeping place off the ground. I rested soundly until daylight and awoke to the sound of rhythmic pounding that seemed to get progressively louder. I crawled toward the sound which was coming from a road below. Coming down the road was a company of goose stepping soldiers in grey heavy coats. I disappeared as fast as I could. The word 'caution' stuck with me all day and night.

"The next day I noticed fields that were farmed but they kept me exposed so I kept going around them, but at dusk I wandered into them and, at the edge, found what appeared to be turnips. Noticing a small creek nearby, I went to clean them. All I had to eat was chocolate from the escape packet. While washing them I heard the snap of a limb, looked up and saw an old man with a large ruck sack on his back. I froze, hoping I was not to be noticed, but it was too late. He stood over me and asked, 'Englise?' then 'Americano?' to which I said 'Yes' by a donkey nod. He replied, 'Gut.' Then said 'Partisano' and pointed to the mountains, motioned for me to follow and soon we were at a small house. He gave me black bread to eat and 'Vino' to drink, put me in the barn loft and covered me with hay.

"The next morning he awakened me and told me that Partisans would come for me soon. Two nights later, 'Mr. Dark Skin,' was introduced to me. All Partisans had fake names, so only being interested in myself, the name was ever remembered, but he was taking control of me.

"We walked most of the night, stopping at a house that night and traveled the next day to a farm house at dusk. Here we were fed and 'Mr. Dark Skin' wanted to see my dog tags and took info from them. The family we were with consisted of a father, mother was dead, he had a 16-year-old daughter and two young boys. The daughter kept house, father and sons worked in town for the Germans. He prodded me to eat and I motioned for him to slow down. He spoke to me in what I took to be German but my two years of high school German was in 1932-33 and I shook my head. Then he spoke Italian,

which my mother taught me as a child. I had trouble understanding so he spoke slowly and clearly. We at least got the basic things across to one another and he repeated to others, in what I later was informed was Croatian. I learned that the nearest town of any size was Celje. Incidentally, the first old gent that aided me said I was walking in the wrong direction, which was toward Zagreb, and Partisans functioned in the mountains from which I had come. Speaking of my first benefactor, he asked for a ring I wore, which was a gift from my wife. Naturally, I gave it to him. To this day my wife doesn't believe it.

"That night I slept in a cold room with 'Mr. Dark Skin,' fully clothed, under quilts and awoke cold and alone. He was gone and the girl and I were alone. While she fed me black bread and ersatz coffee, pilfered from the Germans, I noticed a man dressed in the same dress as the goose steppers. She told me he was a soldier but not to worry. Humbug, I watched him all day.

"That night two couriers (later surmised that all couriers had a route to travel each night) came for me and along with mail orders of the day, etc., transported me to the next station. It was their means of getting news to everyone, and me, along the way.

"Now the sequence breaks down completely. I will relate what happened as I remember, totally out of sequence.

"On one occasion, I was moved with a swarthy looking gent, well dressed, who claimed to be a Russian and was told how the Russians were winning the war and would liberate the world. This I heard daily, on the sides of mountains, among trees in the snow, watching smoke billow from chimneys of homes in the valley, and I'm exercising to keep from freezing. Then one night, 'swarthy' was gone.

"One morning we entered a house where a little old grandmother fed us corn meal mush with fried bacon fat poured over it. God, it was good!

"I don't know how many nightly treks we made until I was told we were to join two other evadees, but before we did, we were climbing a mountain when the sky lit up from flares which I looked at, and tripped over a courier who had hit the dirt in front of me. I rolled down the mountain and returned to the group to receive a stern lecture. Later I learned that I had torn a cartilage in my right knee.

"The two other evadees were 1st Lt. John Doty, 'Mickey' operator, and Sgt. Morris Miller, waist gunner. Prior to joining them, I spent a day with three Partisans and the house we were in came under artillery fire. The whistle of the shells puzzled me and the impact told me I had better get under an interior doorway.

"Once Doty and Miller joined us we were passed on to two new couriers, one who could speak English. I got so excited talking to him that he shushed me several times. I deferred to Doty who was much more composed.

"On another occasion we were taken to a house, at night, and before the new couriers arrived, about 10 Partisans came and they were laughing and carrying on. We learned that they were on a search and destroy operation. They claimed they had destroyed a company of Germans. They had guns, ammunition, food, medical supplies, and clothing. It was a celebration time.

"My wife is Slovak and when they are partying, whiskey is poured into a glass, set in front of you and it is customary that you drink it. The Partisans filled a fairly large glass of what was potato whiskey in front of me and I tried to drink it. I never finished it, but I passed out and later woke up drunk, sick and ran out the door heaving my cookies. The next day I asked Doty if he had the same experience. He hadn't - they never forced him. He took a sip and passed it to Miller.

"We hooked up with two English Majors, two Sergeants, and a US 1st Lt. The Majors were whisked away but the Sergeants stayed with us. We learned from the 1st Lt. (Jack) that there is no mixing of enlisted and officer personnel in the British forces and that the Sergeants were aides to the Majors. Together, they, including Jack, were gathering intelligence behind enemy lines. Jack was OSS. He eluded every effort at telling me his real name.

"We joined a battalion of partisans at Christmas time and were fed roast pig and Vino. They, including their Colonel, treated us great. While with them, a B-17 Group flew over us and a Partisan told us that the black bottom plane leading was English, and the rest were American. I explained that they were all Americans. I explained to them that the so called 'English' plane was equipped to see the ground when it was - here I was unable to remember the word of clouds. About two days later, one of the Partisans remembered and told me.

"Another time, when we were with a small group of Partisans, one man asked to look at my jacket. First he examined it, then put it on and gave me his, shook my hand and walked away. His jacket was two sizes too small for me. If it wasn't for a large section of parachute to wrap myself in, I would have frozen to death.

"The battalion had a goodly group of women in it. They performed all the duties along with the men. One of them wanted to know how, as an American, I spoke the Venetian dialect. I explained that my mother was native Vettorico Veneto.

"While with the Partisans, we washed in a creek. Our bodies and clothes both needed it regardless of the cold. One night, six Partisans, Doty, Miller, and I were taken to a house near the encampment that was like our neighborhood bar. I believe they call it a Bortega. I produced five dollars from my pocket and we ate and drank all night and I received several pieces of paper money as change, some was kept as souvenirs, the rest I gave to a 10-year-old boy who served as the Colonel's gopher. He was rich and I was too. He gave me a big hug.

"Prior to joining Doty and Miller, a courier told me there was a man living nearby who could speak English and I asked if I could speak to him. He had lived in the USA years before and lived and worked in Pennsylvania. If my memory serves me, in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, digging coal at 10 cents an hour. Wages during my time were much higher and he was overwhelmed when I told him. The others couldn't believe it when he told them.

"When the Majors, and party, joined us I learned the Sergeants had guns and I asked to buy a gun. They produced a German Luger, a P-38, a Spanish 38 caliber which looked like our 45 caliber hand gun and an Italian Beretta (small pocket hand gun). They came cheap with a clip each of ammunition. No one else wanted them. I bought them cheap.

"Mess kits to the Partisans was a tablespoon stored in their boot leg. Food was usually soup made of very little, if any, meat but much suet. I got to use a spoon after a kind soldier, or courier, finished eating out of the common pot at center table and after he licked it clean. Naturally, I licked it clean before returning it.

"Cooking was done in a large fireplace built into the kitchen wall and extending into the living area. This served as a sleeping place at night. Prime spot was on top, next to the benches built into the sides. If you didn't make either, the floor was your spot. When the march was over, you made the choice of food or a reasonable spot.

"When we were divorced from the battalion, our couriers took us on a two or three day walk to what may have been a corn field converted to an airfield. The only distinguishing feature - large piles of brush for fires to facilitate night landings. We were taken to a house a couple miles away to wait for transport home.

"We were taken to the field on two occasions without results. So back we went. On each occasion there was some small arms fire. The Partisans had a radio for contact with either a plane in the air or a field position. We saw some equipment the third time we went to the field, which was our last, and with it they were in touch with a plane. When the planes came over, there were two C-47s and about ten P-51s. It was an English controlled set-up. The C-47s landed and the P-51s circled the field until the C-47s were unloaded with whatever cargo they had, then loaded with sick and wounded. We were the last to board.

"Then Bari, delousing, a hot shower, food, debriefing, and back to the 2nd Bomb Group. After a period of rehab, I returned to missions with a different crew each time. I did manage one with my original crew on pilot Warren Newhouses' 35th mission."

VILLACH, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 327 - DECEMBER 8, 1944

Two aircraft took off at 0145 hours on a "Lone Wolf" mission to bomb the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery at Vienna. One plane was an early return and the other plane dropped 11, 500-lb. RDX bombs and 1, M26 propaganda bomb on the Marshalling Yards at Villach. Bombing was by PFF with unobserved results. No injuries, no losses.

REGENSBURG, GERMANY/PILSEN, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MISSION NO. 328 - DECEMBER 9, 1944

Thirty-six aircraft took off to bomb the Synthetic Oil Plant at Brux, Czechoslovakia. Two aircraft were early returns. Seventeen aircraft attacked the Oil Storage Plant at Regensburg, Germany dropping 200, 500-lb. RDX bombs. Bombing was by PFF with unknown results. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate.

Seventeen aircraft of the 20th and 429th Squadrons made two runs on Regensburg but did not bomb. They then made a third run, changed Mickey lead with B-17 #739 taking over (this aircraft is now missing). The change was made too late to bomb Regensburg, so they continued to Pilsen, at which time 16 aircraft dropped 48 tons of 500-lb. RDX bombs and three propaganda bombs by PFF with unknown results. One aircraft from this Group jettisoned its bombs previously with results unknown. After bombing, they continued on, delaying turning off the bomb run and encountered heavy, intense flak at Praha.

B-17 #020 turned back at 45-47N - 12-41E because of loss of two turbos and couldn't keep up with the formation. This A/C bombed Villach, Austria by PFF with unknown results. B-17 #403 received a radio call from B-17 #501 stating it was at an altitude of 800 feet and was going to ditch. When last seen, #501 was off the coast of Yugoslavia with No. 2 engine feathered. At 1630 hours, the radio operator in B-17 #644 picked up an SOS message from #501 stating ditching.

B-17 #739, piloted by 1st Lt. Woodruff Warren, is missing.

B-17 #455, piloted by 1st Lt. Guy Miller made an emergency forced landing at Issi A/D, Italy due to a shortage of gas and severe flak damage. B-17 #550, piloted by 2nd Lt. D. M. Price; B-17 #542, piloted by 1st Lt. A. J. Grossman; and B-17 #365, piloted by 1st Lt. H. L. Baynes also landed at Issi A/D, Italy due to gas shortage.

B-17 #428, piloted by 1st Lt. J. W. Karsten, Jr., made an emergency landing at Falconara A/D, Italy due to a shortage of gas.

B-17 #501, piloted by 1st Lt. D. L. Pierce was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea at 1610 hours as a result of serious flak damage received over Praha, Czechoslovakia. The crew was picked up by a Air-Sea-Rescue launch at 1750 hours and taken to Ancona, Italy. F/O J. E. Skoba, 2nd Lt. J. E. McWhirter, and Sgt. John E. Childress sustained slight injuries as a result of the ditching.

Returning to base from Ancona, Lt. Porter, CP, stated that treatment of the crew, while at Ancona, was quite poor. Upon arrival at the town of Ancona, the entire crew was transported, in one command car, to a compound 16 miles away. At the camp the men were taken to a tent and left there. No medical treatment was offered, though three men suffered injuries from the ditching. All the men were sea sick. Three of the men had lost their shoes and did not receive any footwear until the following day. Members of the crew were: 1st Lt. Dale L. Pierce, P; 2nd Lt. Maurice D. Porter, CP; F/O John E. Skoba, N; 2nd Lt. James E. McWhirter, B; Sgt. Joseph Bury, U/T; Sgt. V. T. Burber, L/T; Sgt. Douglas

D. Dimitry, R/W; Sgt. John E. Childress, L/W; Cpl. Anthony S. Genovese, T/G; and Cpl. W. D. Jeffries, R/O.

Four Me-262s were reported at different times, none attacking.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-97739 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Woodruff J. Warren, 0-755803, P.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Donald L. Hart, 0-822620, CP.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Burke W. Jay, 0-2058488, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	William (NMI) Jolly, 0-777407, B.	(KIA)
2nd Lt.	George D. Mayott, 0-768826, RN.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Frank Pinto, Jr., 38248136, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Joseph A. Cox, 14182286, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Ralph E. Henry, 14192736, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Benjamin J. Sheppard, 12133360, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Warren (NMI) Anderson, 14076996, R/O.	(POW)

The following statement was taken from 1st Lt. Sidney P. Upsher, Pilot on B-17 #650 after the mission: "At 1330 hours, at 47-00N - 13-19E, I called B-17 #739 to ask about the formation. Then he called our aircraft saying that he had one engine feathered and trouble with another and didn't know if he could make it over the Alps. He said he would have to bail out if he couldn't, and would have to ditch if he did make it over the Alps. He was losing altitude and his altitude at that time was 15,000 feet. I called him back and wished him 'Good Luck,' and then heard no more from him.

Statement of S/Sgt. Benjamin J. Sheppard, after liberation. "I have no knowledge of when we left the formation, but I was able to bail out and know of three others that did also.

"I bailed out the waist door first, S/Sgt. Ralph Henry followed, T/Sgt. Anderson was next, and 1st Lt. Jay left by the nose.

"The last word from Lt. Warren was, 'We'll never get over the Alps. We'd better abandon ship.' I was told, after I was captured by the enemy, that he was shot by a German on the road, after being captured. This source was a crippled farmer living nearby. He had a humped back and slightly shorter in one leg.

"I believe he crash landed the ship, after he gave orders to bail out, because one of the other crew members refused to bail out. I have no knowledge of the others except that T/Sgt. Pinto, Upper Turret, was fastening his chute and heading for the bomb bay when I last saw him."

T/Sgt. Warren Anderson was the Radio Operator on Lt. Warren's crew. March 11, 1996: "Apparently my memory of events during my combat days and incarceration days is not very good after 52 years. I had thought all these years that my final mission was to bomb Me-109 fuel storage at Regensburg. I have just reviewed the letter ostensibly from General Twining to my guardian and it states the mission was to Pilsen. In any event, I recall we were bombing by PFF and made several passes before dropping the bombs and subsequently got too close to Munich to avoid the flak. It must have been Innsbruck. Anyway, as I recall the situation, the plane kind of gradually lost power and the flight engineer (Frank Pinto) was changing turbo regulators or something in the camera well with little positive result. Gas was coming out of the wings into the bomb bay. Finally, we were flying at 9,000 feet between the peaks of the Alps and the pilot (Woodruff J. Warren) said to bail out. As I went out the hatch, I saw one of the waist gunners (Cox) by the hatch gritting his teeth. I don't know if he followed me.

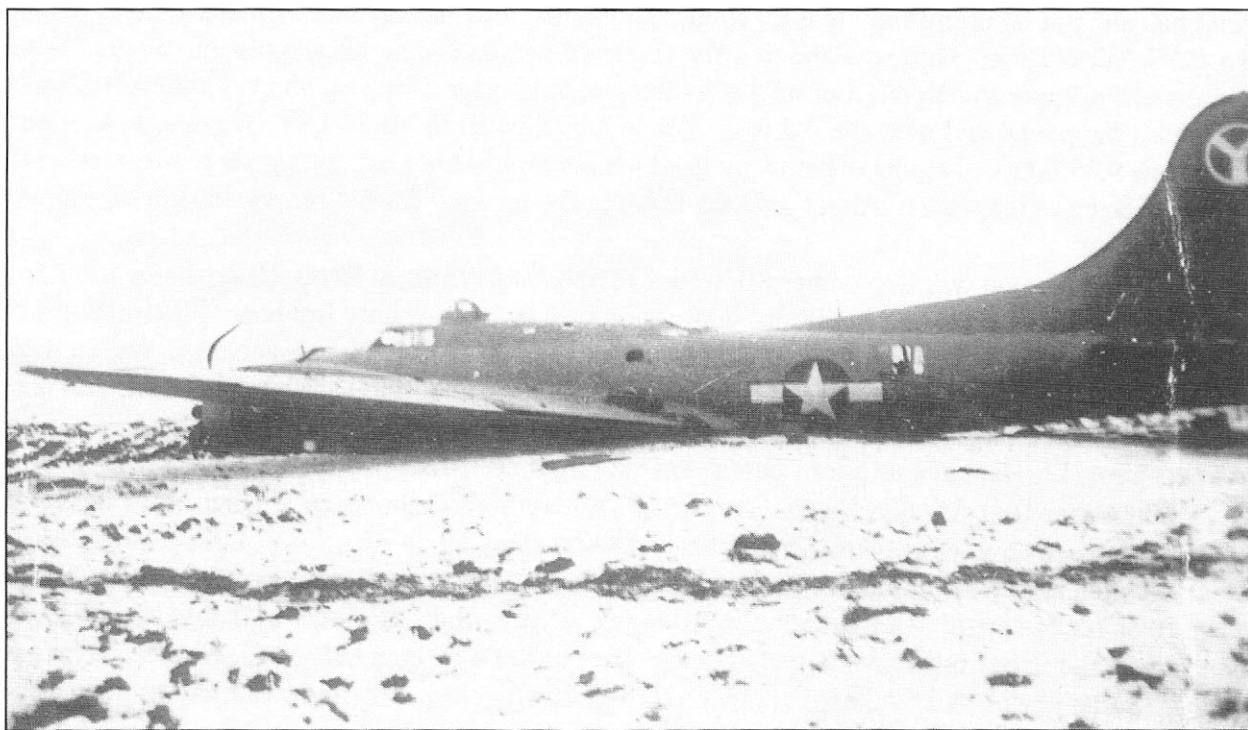
"After about 45 seconds I landed hard on my behind in about two feet of snow. I got up and walked around the mountain a little way and ran across Ralph Henry. We were eating emergency rations and studying some silk maps when a small Austrian soldier with a big rifle fired a shot over our heads and took us captive.

"They took us to a little mountain village which I remember as Oppoltz or Opoltz. I have been unable to locate such a place in several Atlases I have. When we arrived there, Ben Sheppard was already there. There were several people at this place including a rather attractive young blond who spoke some English. I can't remember what she had to say.

"The next day they began to walk us down the mountain to where transportation by truck to Linz was available. On the way, I heard some gunfire (I can't remember whether this was going to the village or away from it), but I do remember seeing a B-17 pancaked in the snow, and apparently unburned, when leaving the village. I remember Ralph Henry and Ben Sheppard because they helped me along the trek down the mountain when my Florida legs gave out in that deep and steep mountain snow. I do not know who the fourth survivor was, perhaps Burke Jay whom I don't remember at all. I am sorry to hear of the demise of Ralph and Ben and to be able to shed so little light on the fate of the other crew members.

"I don't recall that I engaged in much socializing with other members of the Squadron: possibly because I was in a state of chronic fatigue having flown 33 sorties, one rescue (Bucharest) and 53 practice missions in the five months I was in Italy. I do remember going on R&R on Capri but don't remember much of what I did there. The Blue Grotto and the usual, I suppose."

In October 1995, I received a letter from Mr. Karl Affenzeller, living in Freistadt, Austria. We had lost several aircraft in that country and Karl found that I was doing research relative to our Group



A/C #42-97739 Crew: W. Warren (*), D. Hart (*), B. Jay, W. Jolly (*), G. Mayott (*), F. Pinto, Jr.,
(*) J. Cox (*), R. Henry, B. Sheppard, and W. Anderson

*Murdered by local police (Courtesy - Karl Affenzeller)

and so we began to exchange what information we each had. One bit of information was of extreme importance because it dealt with the findings in the deaths of members of Lt. Warren's crew. Portions of Karl Affenzeller's letter follows:

September 18, 1995. "Today I send you a very rare picture, showing Lt. Warren's ship lying in the field on the Austrian-Czechoslovakian border. If you would like it you can publish this photograph in your book.

"Now to the tragic event on December 9, 1945: Franz Strasser-Kreislerter in Kapliz and Captain Karl Lindemeyer, Chief of Police, murdered the following members: 1st Lt. Woodruff J. Warren, 1st Lt. Donald L. Hart, 2nd Lt. George D. Mayott, T/Sgt. Frank Pinto, and S/Sgt. Joseph A. Cox.

"Strasser was hanged by the neck until dead by the Americans in December 1945. Lindemeyer had died by reasons of suicide after World War II in Czechoslovakia.

"Josef Witzany, Nazi-Ortsgruppenleiter and "Volksturm-Chief" in the village of Oppolz (Ticha) was the murderer of 2nd Lt. William Jolly. Before the emergency landing took place, Lt. Jolly bailed out with his chute and landed safely nearby the pilgrimage 'Maria Schnee.' Few minutes later he was shot by Josef Witzany. The murderer fled, possibly to Austria, at the end of the war. I don't know his fate."

Note: Franz Strasser was tried in an American War Crimes trial, convicted and hung.

S/Sgt. Howard F. Struble was a member on the crew of 1st Lt. J. E. Sibert, 20th Squadron. July 15, 1992: "One of my most memorable missions was my 22nd, December 9, 1944. My diary shows that we headed for Brux with 500-lb. bombs at 24,000 feet. All Groups turned back but ours, due to weather. Made a run on Regensburg, Germany, third alternate. Circled around Germany for one and one-half hours and finally dropped our bombs by PFF. Don't know what we bombed. About 10 minutes later, hit flak and got hit pretty bad. In it for about 15 minutes. Formation broke up and we formed No. 2 on a 429th Mickey ship. Hit snow and in it for about 45 minutes when ice sent us into a spin. Sibert gave orders to prepare to bail out, but he got it under control after dropping about 7,000 feet. Nearly dark when it happened and over the Adriatic. Made it back with about 50 gals. of gas left. Got back at 5:15, gone 9:25 hours. Togglelier got hit by flak knocking his helmet off. A big piece just missed the engineer, sticking in the turret. About a dozen holes in the wings. Turned out we hit Pilsen, flak was from Prague.

"My first mission was September 8th to the Marshalling Yards at Brod, Yugoslavia, a six-hour trip at 25,000 feet. Dropped 12, 500-lb. demolition bombs. No enemy fighters. Flak medium but accurate. Just the 2nd made the raid, 26 planes with P-38s as escort. Seven accompanied us to the Adriatic. Had trouble transferring fuel and headed for a field on some island. We turned back and made a lone bomb run on a target as the Group was too far ahead. Entire crew flew except Lt. Leet. Sibert flew as co-pilot, Lt. Hancock as pilot. Direct hits on target reported.

"September 10th, Mission No. 2. Bombed oil refinery in the suburbs of Vienna. Flak heavy and accurate. Don't see how we got through it. Flew at 28,000 feet (-32, plenty cool). Dropped 12, 500-lb. bombs. Flames and great clouds of smoke seen. I flew with another crew as they needed a waist gunner. Was really rough! Tail gunner clipped in the wrist by flak. Big hole in the waist and a piece came through the upper turret dome and knocked the gunner's oxygen mask off. Numerous holes in the wings. Some planes had feathered engines and others with oxygen systems out had to drop down. Escort of P-38s and P-51s helped us out. Credited with two missions.

"September 12th, Mission No. 3. Bombed Airdrome near Munich. The whole Wing (six Groups) participated. We were third Group over target. I rode the lower ball as Flowers wasn't feeling very good. Nearly froze to death. Flak not bad on our Squadron, others caught hell! I was watching

the target but some fellows saw three or four planes go down. Had escort of 150 P-51s. Some Nazi jets were expected but think our escort was too much for them. Bombed the devil out of the target. Noticed silver planes on ground, too big for fighters. Results of raid were good. Passed over another airfield that had been blown to heck. Credited with two missions, 7-1/2 hours.

"September 15th, Mission No. 4. Bombed airfield near Athens, Greece. So called milk-run for the Group, clear of flak. In air eight hours, up at 2:30, which I didn't like. The whole Wing was on raid. Supposed to be 20-30 Ju88s and transports, but very few planes seen. We had 150, 30-lb. frags and they really made a pattern! Group behind had demos. Other four Groups bombed docks, ships, and city. Greece looked to be nothing but mountains and water. Saw the Acropolis. Red grounded for ear trouble so flew in his place. Had Lt. Radner as pilot, good flyer. Lt. Sibert was co-pilot. Joe, Mac, Black, and myself went. Dropped foil.

"September 17, Mission No. 5. Bombed Marshalling Yards in the heart of Budapest, Hungary. Flak heavy and accurate but our Squadron got away with a few holes. One B-17 dropped bombs on another. There was a flash and smoke, then nothing. Left at 5:30, back at 12:45. Had total of 100 gals. left. One B-17 ditched in the Adriatic on the way back. Leet flew his first mission and Sibert his first pilot. Red grounded so had a fill-in gunner and a different navigator.

"September 23rd, Mission No. 7. Bombed Synthetic Plant at Brux, Czechoslovakia. Expected 350 enemy fighters and we had 400 escorts. Four Groups over target before us. Flak heavy, some ships hit pretty bad, but we had only a few holes. Enemy fighters showed up in small numbers and attacked stragglers; which were many! It was a long raid, 7-1/2 hours, 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Flew over Germany for a couple of hours and had flak half dozen times; but could run around it. Makes 10 missions, double credit.

"October 13th, Mission No. 11. Friday the 13th and went to Vienna with 350 guns. My heated suit went out and I nearly froze. Up at 27,000 feet, -40 degrees. Picked up half a dozen flak holes; two near me in waist. The Squadron got separated over target due to vapor trails. Three of us got together and came back alone. There were other Groups nearby. Saw some Me-109s but they kept their distance. About every other plane had a prop or two feathered. A plane ahead of us went into a spin and the guys never had a chance. Bombed an oil refinery, dropped 12, 500-lb. demolition bombs.

"October 17th, Mission No. 13. Bombed Oil Refineries at Blechhammer, Germany. Three radar ships led the Squadron as we led the Group and Wing, No. 6 in the formation. Had 10/10 cloud coverage. Caught little flak as we were at 30,000 and first over target. Two ships from 96th collided over target. Think one crew had a chance to bail out. Had a 4,000-lb. bomb load. Sky was full of P-51s. Our navigator, Lt. Brilliant, was in one of the planes that went down. May have bailed out but doubtful. A crew from Drew was in the other plane and their first mission. Lt. Brilliant had about 20 missions.

"October 20, Mission No. 14. Went to Brux, Czechoslovakia. Flew from 7:30 to 4:30. Barely had enough gas. Nearly landed in Yugoslavia to refuel. Flak was heaviest I have seen yet. Looked like millions of puffs. Don't see how we got through it! Had half a dozen holes around the nose. Sibert got one in the cockpit. Bombed the same synthetic oil plant. Briefed for 190 guns but will change it to 390 after today's raid. Last over target and low Group (25,000). Had 200 plane escort. Twenty-one missions.

"November 7th, Mission No. 18. Bombed Marshalling Yards at Maribor. We were going over target at 23,500 but clouds forced us down to 18,000. Flak was terrific! One ship in our Squadron feathered an engine after it was hit. Another had No. 4 windmilling. We had a hole about one foot in diameter in the wing between No. 3 and No. 4. Must have been a dud because it didn't explode. Tail gunner saw a B-17 behind us blow up and another go down in flames. We didn't drop a bomb due to a rack malfunction. Had 10, 500-pounders. Twenty-eight missions.

"November 19, Mission No. 20. Bombed Vienna at 30,000 feet. I flew lead Mickey ship with Major Shepard. Led the Group. Got hit hard with flak and windmilling prop. About shook the plane apart. Believe we hit the target. Had 250-lb. bombs. Came back alone doing 125 mph. Red and Black flew "GREAT SPECKLED BIRD" and landed at Ancona. They were badly shot up, and wounded co-pilot and navigator. Saw some fighters coming back but they didn't attack us but did some other planes. There were some P-38s in the area. Thirty-two missions.

"December 3rd, Mission No. 21. Bombed Vienna at 30,000 feet with 500-lb. demos. Tail gunner passed out over the target when oxygen mask came loose and nearly died. Reached him just in time. Flak minimum. P-38s over target for escort. Three hundred thirty-eight guns, 34 missions.

"December 26, Mission No. 23. Bombed Blechhammer from 30,000 feet with 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs. Weather was clear. Flak heavy. Lead plane of our Group, with Major Redden, had all four engines shot out and went down over target.

"February 1st, 1945, Mission No. 27. Bombed Graz, Austria at 27,000 feet with 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs. Flew #542 with Sibert. Got hit with flak one-half hour before target. Two big holes; one in radio room and one in vertical stabilizer. Bombed Marshalling Yards. Very hazy at target. Formation broke up, then reformed. Forty-four missions.

"March 15, Mission No. 35. Started out to bomb Ruhland, 75 miles from Berlin. No. 2 engine blew a cylinder 45 minutes before target so we turned back and bombed Marshalling Yards in Amstettin, Austria. Four P-51s escorted us back. We had 250 P-51s as escort with possibility of 300 enemy fighters. Had 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs. Missed the target, bombs landing 200 feet over. Was 50TH MISSION!"

KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 329 - DECEMBER 10, 1944

The Oil Refinery at Brux, Czechoslovakia was the primary target this date. Thirty-two aircraft took off with two aircraft returning early. The formation was recalled at 1030 hours because of the weather. The last Squadron of the Group formation went ahead and bombed Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt, Austria, by PFF, with unobserved results. Seven aircraft got over the target with six dropping 60, 500-lb. RDX bombs and 1, M26 propaganda bomb. The one aircraft had a rack malfunction and did not bomb. No flak.

VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 330 - DECEMBER 11, 1944

Twenty-nine aircraft took off and 16 aircraft dropped 160, 500-lb. RDX bombs and 2, M26 propaganda bombs on the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery at Vienna by PFF. There was an effective smoke screen but two large fires were observed. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate, resulting in light wounds to 1st Lt. David Lande, pilot.

Twelve aircraft dropped 120, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Tank Works at Kapfenburg, Austria. Bombing was visual with a good percentage of bombs in the target area.

One aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs and one, M26 propaganda bomb on an Airdrome at 47-16N - 16-8E. Results were not noted.

Sgt. Dean L. Homer, Tail Gunner of the 96th Squadron, died of anoxia.

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 331 - DECEMBER 12, 1944

Four aircraft took off at 0634 hours and three aircraft dropped 30, 500-lb. RDX bombs and two, M26 propaganda bombs on the South Oil Refinery at Blechhammer. Bombing was by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight, and inaccurate. One aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs and one, M26 propaganda bomb on Oil Refineries at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia by PFF with unobserved results. All returned safely by 1402 hours.

BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MISSION NO. 332 - DECEMBER 16, 1944

Thirty-four aircraft attacked the Synthetic Oil Refinery at Brux by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate with no injuries. One aircraft attacked Marshalling Yards at Villach, Austria, and one aircraft dropped its bombs on Boreun, Czechoslovakia with probable hits on both targets. A total of 277, 500-lb. RDX bombs and five, M26 propaganda bombs were dropped on the three targets. All aircraft returned safely.

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 333 - DECEMBER 17, 1944

Thirty-eight aircraft took off to bomb the North Oil Refinery at Blechhammer. Flak at the target was heavy, intense, and accurate wounding the Lead Radar Navigator in the First Wave. He was knocked unconscious and was not able to prepare the First Wave for bombing. The Second Wave of 18 aircraft dropped 178, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the target by PFF with results unknown. Radar Navigator, Lt. Morton Weinman, recovered and 18 aircraft of the First Wave dropped 170, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Oil Refineries at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia by PFF with unobserved results. B-17 #459 bombed an unknown target of opportunity, dropping 2.5 tons of 500-lb. RDX bombs.

In addition to flak injuries to Lt. Weinman, Lt. Anderson, Co-pilot, and Lt. William Callaghan, Navigator, received slight wounds. All were men from the 96th Squadron. One Me-109 attacked one straggler near Blechhammer, making four passes. There were no injuries.

B-17 #44-6350, piloted by 1st Lt. Leonard Waldman, 429th Squadron, was observed lagging, jettisoning 3, 500-lb. RDX bombs at 45-12N - 16-51E at 1040 hours. This aircraft then joined the formation and was last observed going over Blechhammer, and is missing. Crew members are: 1st Lt. Leonard (NMI) Waldman, P; 2nd Lt. Clayton L. Stemwedel, CP; 2nd Lt. H. J. Kraus, N; 2nd Lt. Milton Bloom, B; T/Sgt. T. A. Price, UT; S/Sgt. C. E. Walker, LT; T/Sgt. J. T. Deets, RW; Pvt. H. M. Jacobs, LW; S/Sgt. W. D. Schultz, TG; and S/Sgt. J. B. Story, RO.

This aircraft was having trouble with No. 3 engine and jettisoned three bombs south, southwest of Lake Balaton. Over the target, #350 was hit by flak. No. 1 engine went out and No. 2 engine was windmilling and could not be stopped. The A/C began losing altitude, left the formation, began jettisoning loose equipment and ball turret then turned due East. Three hours after leaving the target, this A/C made a wheels down landing at Esbesto, Yugoslavia. No one was injured. On December 26th, all crew members, except Lt. Waldman and Lt. Stemwedel, returned to Bari by C-47. The pilot and co-pilot were later to attempt to fly B-17 #350 back to Foggia.

B-17 #452, piloted by Lt. E. C. Bender, made an emergency landing at the 325th Fighter Field due to a feathered engine and a gas shortage. B-17 #386, piloted by 1st Lt. E. H. Miller, made an emergency landing on the Island of Vis due to a gas shortage. There were no injuries on either aircraft.

ODERTAL, GERMANY/MORAVSKA OSTRAVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MISSION NO. 334 - DECEMBER 18, 1944

Thirty-two aircraft took off to bomb the Oil Refinery at Odertal, Germany. Only seven aircraft were able to bomb Odertal, dropping 84, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. Fourteen aircraft attacked an Oil Refinery at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia, dropping 165, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. Six aircraft dropped 71, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Industrial Buildings at 47-20N - 15-10E. Weather was clear with target well covered. One aircraft dropped 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs on a Railroad Bridge at 46-43N - 15-38E. Weather was clear and hits were observed on the north approach and bridge. One aircraft dropped 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Feldback, Austria. Weather was clear and several fires were observed in the Yards.

Six to ten Me-109s and FW-190s were encountered at 49-40N - 17-16E. A joint claim was made for one FW-190 by S/Sgt. M. H. Laude, L/T, and S/Sgt. L. M. Scofield, L/T. One FW-190 was

probably destroyed by S/Sgt. D. W. Dykes, L/W, and one Me-109 was probably destroyed by S/Sgt. Ben Sherman, L/W. All were members of the 20th Squadron. There were no injuries and no losses were reported.

A Congressional Committee visited the Base today. I had the pleasure of escorting the Congressmen from Ohio and Michigan on a tour of the area and to lunch.

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY/MORAVSKA OSTRAVA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA/SOPRON, HUNGARY - MISSION NO. 335 - DECEMBER 19, 1944

Sixteen aircraft dropped 125, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Oil Refinery Gas Plant at Blechhammer by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight, and inaccurate. Six aircraft dropped 46, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the South Oil Refinery at Blechhammer by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight, and inaccurate. Six aircraft dropped 48, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Oil Refinery at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia by PFF with unobserved results. Six aircraft dropped 48, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Sopron, Hungary by PFF with unobserved results. There were three early returns.

B-17 #44-6532, piloted by 1st Lt. Haddon Johnson, Jr., is missing. This A/C was last seen in the South Oil area at Blechhammer, dropped from formation and lost sight of.

B-17 #374 was a late take-off, joined the 99th bomb Group and bombed the primary target with that Group.

B-17 No 162, piloted by 1st Lt. D. E. Hoene, was forced to land at Vis due to fuel shortage. The A/C was severely damaged in landing while avoiding another aircraft.

B-17 #386, piloted by 1st Lt. A. J. Grossman, was forced to land at Vis due to shortage of fuel. All engines had stopped turning and severe damage occurred as a result of the crash landing.

B-17 #459, piloted by 1st Lt. N. E. Falkenstein, made an emergency landing at Vis due to a fuel shortage.

B-17 #654, piloted by 2nd Lt. W. L. Miller, made an emergency landing at Vis due to a fuel shortage. There were no injuries reported in these landings and all crews returned to Base.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6532 - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	Haddon (NMI) Johnson, 0-819323, P.	(RET)
1st Lt.	Banks (NMI) Campbell, 0-767112, CP.	(RET)
F/O	Robert B. Pilcher, T-127068, N.	(RET)
1st Lt.	Richard H. Clarke, Jr., 0-751804, B.	(RET)
T/Sgt.	Herbert S. Kelly, 13038140, U/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Edward (NMI) Storrer, 37207172, L/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Victor (NMI) Slivka, 6944841, R/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	David W. Dykes, 34683581, L/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Leo J. Francis, 12129823, T/G.	(RET)
T/Sgt.	James I. Cash, 34730650, R/O.	(RET)

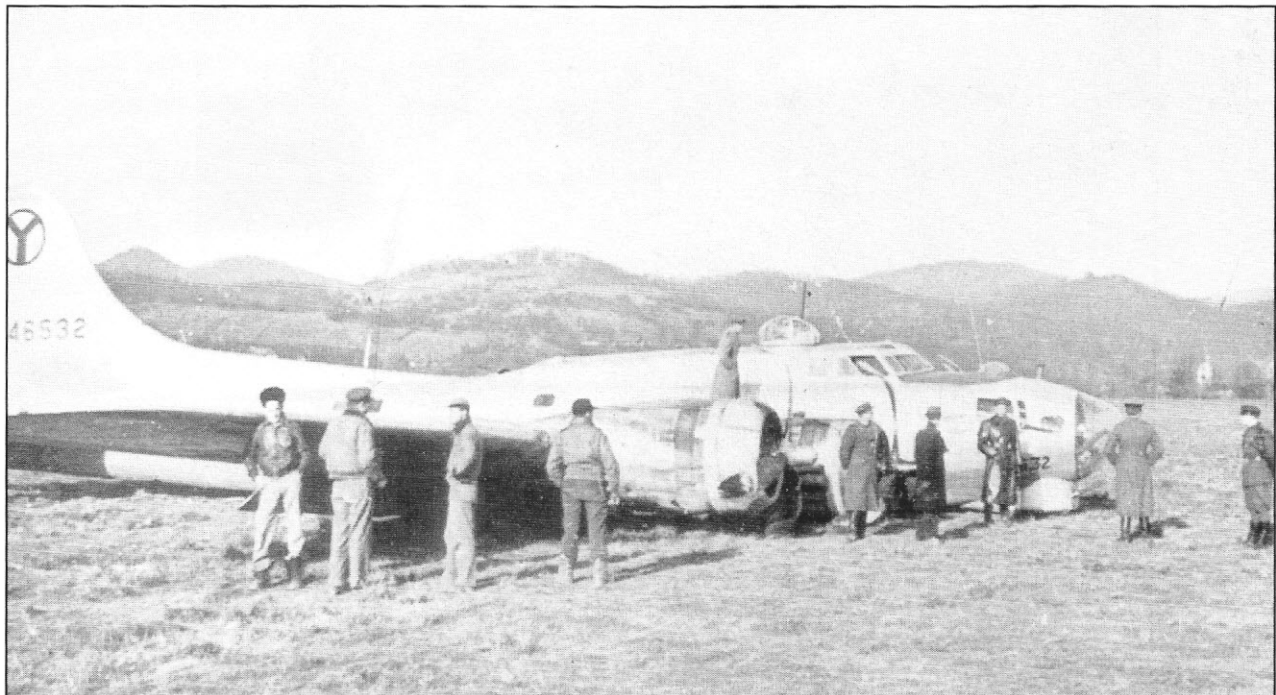
1st Lt. Robert B. Pilcher, N, 20th Squadron. July 20, 1992: "My entire crew never flew an entire mission together. My pilot, Robert Draper, was shot down over Germany and became a POW after two, three, or four night 'Lone Wolf' missions. He had crash landed in the Adriatic before that flying as co-pilot. Robert Phillippe was shot down and think they crash landed in Poland. He also crash landed in the Alps Mountains after the war.

"On December 19, 1944, it was my 21st mission, and was flying as navigator of B-17 #44-6532. We were flying in the deputy lead position. On a seven-minute bomb run, we were three minutes from

the target, the Blechhammer Oil Refinery, when we were badly hit by flak. We lost No. 2 engine, and No. 4 engine was on fire, and we lost altitude immediately. We also had sustained a direct hit through the right wing fuel tank.

"Blechhammer was located in Silesia, which became part of Poland after World War II. We knew we could not make it back over the Alps Mountains to Italy, so we set a southeast course hoping to make it to the Russian lines. We just skimmed over and around mountains in Czechoslovakia and nearly crashed head on with a German command plane in a mountain canyon. We had expected an attack from German fighters who usually tried to pick off 'lame ducks' such as we, but we didn't expect an attack by two Russian fighters near the Hungarian border. We thought such an attack as pure stupidity as all identifications were given by us. Kelly, the upper turret gunner, sent one down in smoke. We saw the pilot's parachute and the other plane then took off. After contacting the Russians later, we of course never mentioned this.

"We were a make-up crew. Banks Campbell and Ed Storrer were from the same original crew. Other than Campbell and Storrer, none of us on that mission were acquainted before we crash landed in Hungary that day. We estimated that we had 15 minutes of fuel left when we crash landed near the front lines in Hungary.



A/C #44-6532 - Crashed in Hungary 12-19-44
Crew: H. Johnson, B. Campbell, R. Pilcher, R. Clarke, H. Kelly,
E. Storrer, V. Slivka, L. Francis, J. Cash (Courtesy R. Clarke)

"The Hungarians helped us contact the Russian area commander in the town of Nagybanya, Hungary. We were guests of the Russian commander for dinner. As you might expect, we had a large bowl of Hungarian stew and a large glass of vodka, no water. Since none of us spoke the same language, we soon had two civilian interpreters from the gold mines in the area. One interpreter was a Yugoslav named Payle (Paul) M. Kavacevic, a mining engineer and graduate of the University of Leeds in England. The other interpreter was a Hungarian Jew from Budapest, Hungary, that we called Joe. Joe was a chemical engineer who had escaped from a German labor battalion and was now employed in gold mine processing by the Russians. He hadn't heard about his family in Budapest for several years.

We spent many hours with our interpreters and heard many stories about their experiences during the German occupation. When we returned to our plane with the Russians, Joe took many photographs and I think the Russians wanted photographs too. When we went to the town photo shop to get the film developed we met the photo shop owners, Zoltan and Foltanne Suba, who were friends of Paul and Joe. We were all invited to their home for Christmas dinner although food was rather scarce. We enjoyed our Christmas evening very much.

"The Russians were friendly but the command seemed suspicious and we were thoroughly interrogated. After about a week, we were driven, in a Studebaker truck, by a Russian Air Force captain and a sergeant who had arrived to take us to their air base at Arad, Romania. Ironically, the Russian captain had ferried airplanes out of the Kansas City Modification Center in 1942 while I was working there. From Arad, we were flown, in a Romanian two-engine airplane, in a hair-raising ride to Bucharest, Romania. In Bucharest, we were weathered in for a period of about two weeks, where we had many experiences with the Romanians and the Russians who were in control of the city. Finally, our crew and another American crew were flown back to Italy in a C-47. After a week's leave in Rome, I returned to my base to complete my tour of duty."



T/R - L/R - R. Burns, F. Brice, R. Draper, R. Pilcher, R. Colvert
 B/R - L/R - K. Markey, J. Johnson, R. Phillippe, W. Mitchell
 (Courtesy - R. Clarke)

1st Lt. Richard H. Clarke, Jr., B, on A/C #44-6532. January 26, 1994. "On the December 19th mission, it was a hasty made-up crew. None of us were flying with a regular crew. As a matter of fact, I recall that none of us knew each other until that day although each of our regular crew were flying.

"My story is much the same as Bob Pilcher's and others of the crew. I guess we all may have had some individual differences.

"We crashed in Hungary, in a remote area originally called Nagybanya, but the name we knew it by was Baia Mare. Don't know what it is now as it was in Russian hands after the war. Location was in the Carpathian Mountains. The town is, or was, a small one, typical of rural eastern agricultural

villages. We were there for a week as Christmas passed that time. The place may not have been important to the Krauts or the Russians as there was not noticeable devastation as I recall.

"One interesting thing I encountered there of a personal nature was to be told by some local types that there was a gold mine, or mines, in the area. I was alone when told this and it was pointed out by a civilian that in the direction northwest of town was the gold mine area. Being young, a junior officer on our aircrew, in the middle of a war, this meant little to me although I always remembered it.

"At a later time, I was leaving a Russian Colonel's office and saw some rock quartz on a shelf, and took one. It was pinkish quartz with dirt and other material on it. There was also what appeared to be shiny flakes and yellow larger pieces in it. I took it as a souvenir but never pursued the matter further. I did keep the rock through the war and for some years after in my home but eventually was lost somewhere in moves.

"After leaving Nagybanya, to go to Bucharest, we were piled into a HE-111 (I think it was) or maybe a Junkers of some kind. We were trucked to a small field where the plane was. Not a corn field as we know it but just a field. The plane had three black German crosses on it, on wings and fuselage, Swastika on the tail. The flight was very low over hills and dales so I guess that the Jerry's would not pick us up or maybe let them see the plane and not shoot one of their own down. I don't know. Dangerous territory!



L/R - R. Clarke, B. Campbell, H. Johnson, R. Pilcher
Knocked out No. 2 Engine (Courtesy - R. Clarke)

"We landed at Bucharest at one of the many fields the Luftwaffe used before the Russians came there. I recall vividly being trucked from where we landed (Ploesti area I think) through the big oil storage area that was hit during the early Ploesti raids. I remember seeing large storage tanks painted black but the paint had faded enough to see the original logo and printing of the big oil producers before the war. Distinctly I remember seeing the name of 'Concordia Vega Oil Co.' and a large logo of the one used by Shell Oil

Company. It was the large, yellow sea shell the company uses and Concordia Vega, I checked out years later, was part of the European Shell Oil empire.

"The weather kept us grounded in Bucharest for about two weeks. Bucharest was declared an open city in that sector of battle with the Russians moving ever forward to Germany. So, as Bucharest was an open city, very little hard destruction took place there. Some of course, but not the terrible rainstorm as we saw in other places.

"The city was known through the centuries as 'Little Paris' and so it was! I was so amazed at the wholesale obliteration elsewhere that the city seemed like an American city. There were wide, beautiful boulevards and avenues. Plenty of civilian cars - all American made - in use. Taxi cabs, buses and trucks. Most of the passenger cars were four-door sedans with chrome. I remember particularly that a very high number of them were Packards. Perhaps the Packard was symbolic of money from before the war when the oil companies operated from the famous Ploesti oil fields and refineries.

"In addition, the shops were open, hotels, bars and restaurants in operation, book stalls, wine shops all doing a brisk business.

"Upon arrival in Bucharest, we were lodged at the Hotel Staniscu, right in the city proper. I do not remember if all of us were put up in that hotel or only part of us, others going to other hotels. In any event, at the Staniscu we all had individual rooms, comfortable with basic amenities.

"Not far from the hotel and just across the street was the large, King Carol's palace with iron fences, gates and concrete walls. It was not in use at the time and had a very ominous appearance. It was a very dark grey color and dreary looking. I am not sure if there had been a fire there as there were a lot of black streaks all over. I would imagine from the air it would look somewhat indistinguishable. Perhaps it was painted that way as a camouflage because it was explained to me that it had been used by the German Gestapo as their headquarters in that area for interrogation, holding of suspect prisoners, and the usual Gestapo activities. I was asked if I would like to see the place and it did not take me very long to say, 'NO.' I did not wish to go near the place other than walk by it while strolling on the sidewalk.

"All of us were using the money from our 'escape kits' that were given to us at briefing before the mission. We were buying things to bring back, small items for souvenirs, and through eating, etc., our finances were running very low. At that time we were in contact with, I believe, an American Mission, somehow connected with a legation or something of that sort. Anyway, they had a large black field safe in their office in one of the better buildings in Bucharest. That safe was jam packed with American money. I know because a couple of us went there and cried the blues that we were in bad shape financially and sorely in need of money.

"Since these people were State Department reps or some other U.S. Government organization, they probably had more diplomatic functions to perform and we were the last thing they wanted to have anything to do with. So they gave us some more money. I do not recall how much, but not a lot, enough to get rid of us and out of their hair. So after that we went out and about and continued doing our 'thing.'

"One of the things we spent a lot of time at was a downstairs bar-restaurant-dance and show place. It was a very nice, respectable place, always crowded, good music, food and drink. This place was used by better class people and nothing out of tone although there were plenty of ladies around for dancing, talking, etc. The name of the place as I vaguely recall - 'The Manhattan Bar and Restaurant' or maybe, 'The New York Club Restaurant and Bar.' Anyway, the name had something to do with New York.

"There were not nearly as many Russian military there as one might expect. We fraternized with them but the association did not get too cozy because neither the Russians nor we people could understand the language differences. But our associations, as fleeting as they were, were quite cordial.

"One person totally befriended us and was always around. He was a Romanian Luftwaffe officer, young and about our ages. He was really taken up by us and we enjoyed his company too. He helped get us around and showed us the 'ropes' which served us quite comfortably. His name was Rodu Stanoiu and rank was a Lieutenant of some sort. He became a good friend with me as he spoke fair English. We exchanged wings. I cherish these wings of silver which are quite ornate with the crest in color at center. The device is quite stylish so my wife on occasion would use it as dress jewelry from

time to time. In fall and winter, I sometimes wear a beret and affix the wings to it. Once in awhile someone asks where they could obtain one and that brings up an enjoyable conversation.

"The wings were pinned on the right upper tunic pocket and slanted at about 45 degrees inward. Rodu said he was an Me-109 pilot and slanted wings indicated fighter status. Rodu was a very intelligent young man and not very interested in the war, or military, even before Romania capitulated. He talked so many times about after the war as he visioned. His main obligation was to come to the United States and go to Harvard University. I lost his calling card and address with notes I made of our talks. I would have liked to have seen him again through the post-war years.

"An incident I recall vividly was New Year's Eve, 1944. Bob Pilcher had befriended the very young son of the Swiss Ambassador and played ping-pong with him on occasion. As a result, the boy invited us to the New Year's Eve party at the Swiss embassy. It was a gala occasion; fine orchestra, good food, plenty to drink, ladies in formal gowns, men in tails or tuxedos. Just like in the movies.

"The amazing part was that we grubby people in our flying jackets and only G.I. shirts, trousers and those big G.I. shoes we wore when flying, made quite a contrast. We also sported our pistols at our hip, cowboy fashion. I often wondered what those people thought we were. It was a great party and a very liberated night. We were chauffeured in a limo to the party as well as being returned to the hotels. One of the more pleasant and memorable times during the wartime ugliness.

"Sometime later, I do not recall when, a C-47 or DC-3 arrived to take us back to Bari, Italy. I do not know how this got coordinated but it must have been through the American Mission people who, it seemed, would be happy to get rid of us. I think we were becoming pests to them.

"What a low blow it was on returning to Italy after carefree time in Bucharest. We were impounded at Bari. Sent through the delousing chambers as was the routine for all returnees. Interrogation followed and then we were sent back to our units. There were others that joined us in Russia besides those of the 2nd Bomb Group. There was an assortment of fighter pilots, transport crews, and other Bomb Group members.

"It was interesting to note that at the Russian field from which we took off was loaded with U.S. lend-lease equipment, but all with Russian markings. One of the unusual things was that almost all of the Russian C-47s were modified with an upper gun turret similar to our B-17s. They were very distinguishable and the unique silhouettes made a big impression on us.

"After Bari, back to the units. Some people go home to the U.S., some to rest camps, and others just resting around the Squadron for a few days and then back to combat again.

"Oh those terrible years! How they changed people!"

REGENSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 336 - DECEMBER 20, 1944

Thirty-four aircraft took off to bomb Oil Storage Tanks at Regensburg. Thirty aircraft dropped 300, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight, and inaccurate. One aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs at 47-32N - 14-06E by PFF. Three aircraft were early returns. No injuries, no losses.

BRUX, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - MISSION NO. 337 - DECEMBER 25, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off to bomb the Synthetic Oil Refinery at Brux. Twenty-five aircraft dropped 291, 500-lb. RDX bombs into a very effective smoke screen by PFF. Flak at the target was heavy, intense, and accurate resulting in the loss of B-17 #44-6550, 49th Squadron, piloted by 1st Lt. William R. Myers. One aircraft dropped 6, 500-lb. RDX bombs on a Railroad Bridge at Klagenfurt, Austria with bombs straddling the bridge. Two other aircraft were early returns.

1st Lt. R. E. Chambers, Co-pilot, 20th Squadron, and 2nd Lt. L. H. Seeholm, Navigator, 429th Squadron, were slightly wounded by flak.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6550 - "OLD CROW" - 49TH SQUADRON

1st Lt.	William R. Myers, 0-1692801, P.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Libero P. Casaccia, 0-779783, CP.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Walter R. Stone, 0-723707, N.	(RET)
F/O	John T. Dunlap, T-5741, B.	(RET)
T/Sgt.	William N. Carruthers, 34509149, U/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Richard L. Greiner, 771750, L/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Joseph (NMI) Waladkewics, 32751006, R/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	William S. Gutmann, 12166767, L/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Herbert W. Wendt, 6694118, T/G.	(RET)
T/Sgt.	James B. Miller, 32390963, R/O.	(RET)

Statement of T/Sgt. William N. Carruthers after return to Allied control: "The plane was going over the bombing run when No. 1 and No. 2 engines began running away. There was no obvious reason for this so Lt. Myers assumed that there was flak damage, which afterwards proved to be true, and feathered both engines. The plane lost air speed and altitude so bombs were salvoed and plane turned out of formation. The men worked on plane and administered first aid to S/Sgt. Wendt who had been hit with a piece of flak in the right hand. Despite repeated efforts, the No. 1 engine failed to respond. Lt. Myers decided that according to the distance to go and the remaining gas, it would be impossible to make the base.

"Lt. Myers asked for the nearest Russian base and the navigator, Lt. Stone, gave him the A/D at Gyangyos, Hungary. When we arrived there we couldn't find it. Later it proved to be there but well camouflaged. So we circled around and found another field. This was at Koraconj, Hungary, 48-08N - 19-40E. We were taken in by some Russian fighters and landed safely.

"We were never in enemy hands.

"The plane landed and we were met by Russian officials, who had S/Sgt. Wendt taken care of and the rest of us dined and billeted. Lt. Myers attempted to make contact with home base by radio every day, finally succeeding about three or four days after landing. Home base kept in contact from then on, but due to adverse conditions of weather, could not send any fighters or repair planes to aid us. After much work and many attempts of Russians to repair plane, they sent to Debreczen, Hungary for a new prop governor from a B-17 that had landed there. This was finally adjusted, loaded with Russian gas, about 95 octane, and we took off, landing at base 16 January 1945."

S/Sgt. Joseph Waladkewics, Right Waist Gunner, April 10, 1995: "I will attempt to tell my story of Christmas Day, 1944. We were briefed to drop on the Bruks Iron Works, Czechoslovakia. As best as I recall, we were flying at 31,500 feet, 105s were exploding above us and 88s below us. We got to the I.P. The concentration of anti-aircraft artillery was very heavy. We made our bomb drop and shortly after, the plane was hit. I felt a gush of air and, flying right waist, I thought my window was knocked out but now looking at it, it was okay.

"Instinctively, to my left waist gunner I said, 'Touch my left leg if you are all right.' No response and thinking maybe he had touched my leg and I was badly hurt and had no feeling, but he was okay. I had failed to push my throat mike button.

"Then over the intercom it was pilot to navigator, 'Give me a course to Russian lines.' The reply was, 'For now make a 160 degree,' and soon after the navigator gave the correct course to Hungary.

"The plan was, after dropping our bombs, we were to turn left and return to base with the rest of the Squadron. We turned right, going over the target area and were reported, by other crews, that we went down over the target. No. 3 engine was knocked out. After flying on the corrected course for

awhile, we were picked up by two Russian fighters and escorted to a small landing strip. We landed in a frozen cornfield in Koraconj, Hungary (Christmas, Hungary-translation).

"After safely down, my ability to communicate with the Russians made things very easy for us. We were later transported to Hatvan, Hungary where I was interviewed by a Russian Colonel. Can't remember what we talked about except being based in Italy, our target mission, and maybe my heritage.

"We made several attempts to contact our base without success, and inspecting our damage with the engineer, William Carruthers, and the pilot, we discovered our prop governor was knocked out.

"We reported this to the Russians and the following day, or so, a Russian Captain and I reinspected the damage, and then later, the Russian Captain and I flew to Debreczen, Hungary where there was a downed B-17. We flew just above the telephone poles, almost as if traveling a highway.

"We stayed overnight in Debreczen and returned the following day with the prop governor, and the engineer installed it in our plane. Sometime later our pilot pre-flighted the engines and we all boarded and took off for base. Home base was surprised to hear from us since we had been reported 'Missing in Action' for 21 days.

"Our plane was named 'OLD CROW,' which had been baptized by Ed Troy. I remember one non-com on board was a young tenor who entertained the Russians, and fellow American flyers, with the international song, *Rosalie*.

"I never really had any buddies in the service. I moved around a lot and don't remember ever flying with the same crew I went overseas with. Strange but true. I best remember Ed Wade because as I recall, he laughed with and not at me.

"One other memorable mission was in the latter part of my tour in Foggia, maybe March 1945. The mission was to support ground troops north of the Po River. We were carting 100 pounders, and we only had a few minutes to drop our bombs. The mission was to drop bombs, peel off to the left and come back.

"The routine get-to the I.P. and then the silence signal by the pilot. Shortly after, the bombardier reports bomb bay doors coming open-radio man echos doors coming open and are open. Next it is bombs away and bomb bay doors coming closed. It did not go as routinely. As the doors were almost closed, one live bomb, which had hung up, released as the doors were closing, falling halfway through the belly skin of the door of our plane. Normally the radio man says if all went correctly that doors were coming closed and now closed. Instead, the radio man excitedly relayed the message over the intercom that a live bomb was hanging through the belly of the plane. I checked the condition and said to myself that I can handle this. Holding onto the chain railing, while standing on the cat walk, I pulled the bomb free from where it was lodged, holding it by the fins. I held the bomb in that position until we were over the open sea, west of Italy. Then released the bomb as instructed by the pilot. I then went back to the waist position.

"The only recognition I got was a personal satisfaction of doing a fine job. While walking away from the plane after landing at our base, the co-pilot said to me, 'You ought to be put in for the Bronze Star.' I heard nothing more. What is more strange is that, as were most of my flights, this was a strange crew and don't remember any of the other flyers' names."

BLECHHAMMER, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 338 - DECEMBER 26, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off and 22 aircraft dropped 315, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the South Oil Refinery at Blechhammer by offset bombing and with good results. Many fires were reported. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate resulting in the loss of B-17 #42-97715, 96th Squadron, and wounding S/Sgt. G. D. Cosby, TG, 96th Squadron. Thirteen aircraft received minor damage and seven received major damage. One aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Czelldemoke, Czechoslovakia with good results reported. Five aircraft were early returns.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-97715 - "FRANKIE" - 96TH SQUADRON

Major	George A. Redden, 0-728558, P.	(RET)
1st Lt.	James O. McHood, 0-768184, CP.	(RET)
1st Lt.	Chester E. Toton, 0-722900, N.	(RET)
Capt.	William R. Underhill, 0-729520, B.	(RET)
1st Lt.	Morton Weinman, 0-703354, RN.	(RET)
T/Sgt.	Alphonso C. Liberto, 33776753, U/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	George R. Merritt, 38478369, R/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	James J. Duchek, 37136693, L/W.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Sol D. Azar, 0-828605, T/G-Observer	(RET)
T/Sgt.	Charles F. Carey, 31226007, R/O.	(RET)

Major George A. Redden, P, after return to Allied control: "We were at bombs away at target when we were hit and left the formation. No one bailed out. We crash landed at Rzeszow, Poland. All the crew were in their crash positions except the co-pilot and all were un-injured except Lt. McHood. He was taken to a hospital in Rzeszow where his leg was amputated.

"We sent his possessions to Cairo, Egypt to be delivered, upon his request, to him. I have heard, indirectly, that Lt. McHood survived and returned home."

Captain William R. Underhill was a member of the 96th Squadron, serving at various times as either Radar Navigator or Bombardier. June 13, 1992. "I was commissioned and received my wings at Victorville, California, 4 September 1942, and after instructing at various bombardier and navigation schools, I was sent to Boca Raton, Florida for radar navigation. I departed from the United States from Camp Patrick Henry, in Virginia, aboard the U.S. Admiral Mann and landed at Oran, awaiting assignment orders. I arrived in Naples, Italy in June and received orders assigning me to the Fifth Wing - the only B-17 Wing in Italy. Jim Snyder, Dick Phelps and I were still together but then I received orders to report to the 2nd Bomb Group and Dick and Jim were assigned to the 99th B.G. nearby.

"With flight crews, we climbed aboard a little Italian train that chugged its way through the mountains toward Foggia. It wasn't a passenger train in the usual sense for it had no seats or compartments. I suppose at one time it had hauled produce or live stock of some kind. The trip to Foggia took almost a day and a half. Our pace was so slow that we sometimes got out and walked just in order to get some exercise and relieve the boredom. Often when passing through a little town in the mountains or valleys, women would come along side trying to sell baskets of peaches, grapes or plums. We particularly like the purple plums. Most of us ate far more than we should, and by the time we reached Foggia, we were stopping more often than the train. It was a painful way to learn the dangers of eating unwashed Italian fruit.

"The day was beastly hot when we arrived in Foggia. The train left us off in a wheat field that had just been harvested, and I remember the grasshoppers were the largest I have ever seen. We boarded a 2-1/2 ton truck and headed for west of town. My first sight of the 2nd was inspiring, for I saw a large rambling one-story building of stone perched on a hill. It was impressive, and the driver told us it was the officer's mess hall and officer's club.

"I reported to the 96th Squadron, and since every flying officer was supposed to have a home crew, I was assigned to one already there. My first crew consisted of Charles Duncan, pilot; Hal Bogie, co-pilot; Wib Clark, navigator; and Roger someone, bombardier. In addition, there were five enlisted men, whose names I've forgotten. I was supposed to be the radar navigator, but since only the lead or deputy lead ships were equipped with radar, I never flew any combat missions with my assigned home

crew. For nearly a week, I flew training missions around the boot of Italy, learning the coastline, islands, cities, or mountains that could be more easily identified on my clock shaped radar scope.

"My first combat mission was to the Winterhafen Oil Depot at Vienna, Austria, July 16, 1944. My pilot for this initial mission was a Lt. Flannigan, and it was the only mission I ever flew with him. Flak at the target was reported to be very heavy and quite accurate. I couldn't tell because as yet had no basis for comparison, and besides, shut in my darkened cubbyhole all I could hear above the roar of the engines was the incessant spattering of what sounded like hail on the ship's fuselage. It was reported that the Group lost two aircraft that day.

"My next mission was to Memmingen Airdrome at Munich, Germany. The weather was good, and there was little need for Mickey although, of course, I kept the set on and a log of our flight. We carried 12, 500-lb. bombs and our base altitude was 25,500 feet. We had excellent bomb results from the visual sighting. The Group lost one aircraft and our navigator reported seeing one ship peel out of the formation ahead before going down and that could have been it.

"On the next mission, July 22, which was scheduled for the huge Romano/Americano Oil Refinery at Ploesti, Romania, I was assigned as bombardier. We rendezvoused over the Adriatic, and as was standard practice to clear all the machine guns while we circled and climbed for altitude over the water our pilot ordered us to test fire our guns. I was just getting into position to test fire the chin turret guns when all of a sudden there was a sharp hit on the nose of the plexi-glass in front of me and I couldn't figure out what happened. I felt the air rushing in through a web-like hole that was now in front of my face. Both Ed Harris and I were stunned, and he said, 'My God, you'r hit.' I hadn't felt anything, but blood was running down my forehead.

"A shell casing from the tail guns of the ship ahead of us had come through the nose and struck me. The plexi-glass had almost stopped the casing, so it had very little velocity by the time it hit my forehead. It was amazing that I bled so profusely because the wound was little more than a scratch; nevertheless because of the hole, the pilot decided to abort the mission. I went to the dispensary and the aide insisted on putting an oversize bandage on it. We got no credit for the mission. It turned out to be a particularly tough one and the 20th Squadron lost one ship.

"August 22nd. Today was my toughest mission so far. Our target was a synthetic oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. I led the Squadron again, and we bombed at 26,000 feet. My home crew flew in the number seven position, and the entire crew went down when we were hit by bandits near Lake Balaton. Our tail gunner reported seeing three chutes get out of Duncan's plane. We also lost another ship from the 96th.

"On September 22, we made another long flight to Brux, Czechoslovakia. We carried 12, 500-pounders and bombed from an altitude of 27,500. We expected a lot of fighter opposition and as a result were well protected by our friendly P-38s and P-51s. Our Group saw no enemy planes but learned that the brigands had successfully attacked several bombers that had lagged and had to fall out of formation. Czechoslovakia was cloud covered by the time we got there. The clouds didn't prevent the flak from coming up in heavy and accurate bursts, however. We led the Group, Major Jordan, pilot, and Mike Weinman as Mickey. We bombed entirely on PFF (radar), and Weinman and I are beginning to get our coordination down better. He doesn't seem to get excited over the intercom. Often I fear he is not in control of his set and position, but I am learning that is just his manner and nonchalance. Of course we had no idea of where our bombs hit; all we can be sure of is that they reached the ground somewhere in Czechoslovakia. This was a really tiring flight as we had to cross some very heavy flak areas both going and coming. We were in the air just five minutes short of ten hours.

"One afternoon, I went down to a nearby fighter field. This one was for P-38s. A few of those ships had been fixed so that they could carry a 500-lb. bomb under each wing. Three ships would then fly in a close V formation. The lead one had been modified by installing a plex-glass nose in which they

put a bombardier and a bomb sight - not a Norden but a relatively simple thing called the D8. It was made by National Cash Register Company and our standing joke was that when the bombardier missed his target a little red flag popped up reading, 'No Sale.' The sight was simply a dropping angle that the bombardier set manually. It was pretty rudimentary compared to the intricate Norden or Sperry, but for low level it served its purpose, and the cramped space of the P-38 was about all that could be used anyway. These modified ships were called 'droop snoots,' and I decided to fly at least one mission in them just for the hell of it even though I knew it would not count in my total for a tour. It was a chance to see more tactical bombing than strategic and to fly in one of the fighters I had admired from the ground.

"Three of the P-38s, with me in the nose of the lead one, took off just after lunch and headed for a target in northern Yugoslavia. Our B-17s usually required a couple of hours to reach bombing altitude, but those three jocks were at 15,000 feet before I even got my oxygen hooked up. We had climbed to that altitude in order to cross the mountains; when it came time to bomb we would descend to an indicated altitude of 12,000 feet where we would be only 4,000 feet above the target, a Railroad Marshalling Yards. I kept listening to the three pilots chatter among themselves. In a bomber crew I usually stayed on intercom, but on this flight there was only the pilot to listen to anyway, and all three pilots in the echelon needed to be kept informed. At one spot we saw a few specks of flak quite far off to our right. You'd have thought those pilots were approaching flak at Ploesti; they were so concerned about that distant flak. To us in bombers, flak was expected on every mission. It was enemy fighters we dreaded most. However, these crazy hot rods kept searching the sky hoping to find some German fighters whom they could entice into a fight. If that would have happened they would immediately jettison the bombs and I would merely be a passenger-witness to a dog fight. The idea left me cold, for I never saw a German fighter that I didn't fear. However, we saw no Jerries, and in no time we were over the target. We circled it once, dropped down to our bombing altitude and came in at a ground speed that was twice as fast as I was used to. At that low altitude though there was no chance of missing, and the three pilots complimented me for the bomb results.

"Late on Christmas Day, flight crews for a mission on the morrow were posted on Squadron bulletin boards. Redden, Toton, Weinman, and I were scheduled, and we were all glad to see we would be in 'FRANKIE,' old reliable #715.

"At briefing the morning of December 26th, we learned that the target was Blechhammer South. The Blechhammer Oil Refinery was in Selesia. We took off at 0700, each ship in our Group carrying 10, 500-pounders. On this day Redden was not only leading the Group, we were in the first Group in our Wing. This one would be my 50th mission, and with a touch of bravado I had broken my habit of not telling the folks at home what was my score. I wrote my Uncle a day or two before Christmas that with only one mission it would be all over for me, one way or another, by the time he was reading this letter. Of course, I really thought that it would be simply another run and then I would take pride in completing 50 of them. I doubt that any young man feels that he's likely to die on a particular day. I know I didn't. I was a little apprehensive about the bad luck of drawing Blechhammer for this last one though. Why couldn't it have been a milk run to some place in Northern Italy?

"There seemed to be a little consolation in the fact that our indicated altitude was to be 29,500 feet. Since the target itself was 690 feet above sea level that meant that we would be at 28,810 feet above the big guns on the ground. That altitude was higher than we had ever gone before and we knew that some ships would not be able to make it. Later events shredded any hope that a higher altitude would result in less accurate flak.

"Our I.P. was Neustadt, a town lying 50 miles directly south of Blechhammer. We arrived there without incident, even crossing the dangerous Lake Balaton area without seeing any fighters. When we were at the right altitude and about 15 miles from Neustadt, Toton and I climbed into our flak suits.

Since we were to be the lead ship in the First Wave to hit the target that day, we as yet saw no flak in the distance. Almost as soon as we leveled out from our turn at the I.P. and established our course of 355 degrees, however, flak began coming toward us. From the first volleys, it was heavy and very accurate. One of the early bursts struck our ship on the right side wounding Lt. McHood, our young co-pilot. He was slightly injured in the right arm, but by this time we had sighted the target area and were leveling out on the run. I looked around and saw the other ships had their bomb bay doors open and were packed in tightly with us. Toton had retreated to the farthest corner of the nose. The flak was so intense I wished I could join him, forgetting the fact that a few feet farther back gave him no further protection than I had hovering over the bombsight. We were getting closer to the target now, and flak was so heavy I had such crazy thought as wondering why in the world they were shooting at us. We hadn't done anything. Just about that time, a terrific burst struck No. 3 engine, and much of the shell must have hit McHood in the knee, shattering his right leg.

"This happened nearly a minute before bombs away. Although I knew we were targeting the refinery all right, there was so much smoke on the ground that I could not quite make out our assigned aiming point. I found a series of tanks that according to the briefing pictures was close to our aiming point, so I synchronized on them. Flak continued rattling through our ship and Redden called out that the co-pilot had been hit. I told him we were still a minute from bomb release. The automatic pilot on 'FRANKIE' had been working so well, but suddenly, it too went out and I could only move the plane by swinging the secondary clutch. Meanwhile, flak never left us, and after a few particularly close, dusty, bursts, I smelled the acrid odors that were almost suffocating. Another burst came directly in front of us splintering a web-like hole in the plexi-glass nose. The blast might not have been as large as it seemed, but the bombsight had been hit and I fell over backward either in fright or from the force of the onrushing air. I crouched forward and took a final look through the eyepiece. Fortunately, the cross hairs were now on our aiming point and were not moving, meaning that we were well synchronized. I judged the indices were about 10 seconds apart, so I locked the trigger mechanism and stared in frightened fascination at the dangerous clouds of flak churning all around us.

"How glad I was when I felt the ship jump upwards, for that meant the bombs were finally away and we were 5,000 pounds lighter. Almost at bomb release, our No. 1 engine also was knocked out and Major Redden was calling for someone to help the co-pilot. The flak was still heavy and right on us. I closed the bomb bay doors, removed my flak suit and went to the cockpit.

"Jim McHood, whom I had known only slightly before this mission, was in deep shock - so much so that at first I thought he was dead. Liberto, flight engineer, and I tried to lift him out of the seat, and then he moved his left arm slightly in a vain effort of trying to help. His flak helmet fell off, but somehow we got him pulled out of his seat and dragged him to the catwalk. Lib kept giving him oxygen all the time, and after we got him stretched out on the catwalk, we got a better look at his knee. The whole joint had been shot away and bones showing through the dark red meat were jagged and glistening white. At that altitude there wasn't really a lot of blood and what had run out had quickly congealed into a thick dark, red mass. We found a nylon strap and tied it tightly around his thigh somewhat like we had been instructed to in first aid classes. I opened one of the emergency first aid packets and found a paper of sulfanilamide powder which I sprinkled liberally over the horrible gaping wound. Then I asked Lib to loosen the tourniquet every ten minutes if we stayed in the air that long. I then took one of the needles from the first aid packet and gave McHood a full shot of morphine in his left arm. For the first time we noticed the wound in his right arm, but it was slight compared to the grisly one that had almost severed his leg just below his right knee. I wasn't sure how much longer the Major could keep us flying, for now the entire ship was shuddering violently and we were losing altitude rapidly.

"I had no idea what I could do, but I climbed forward again and into the co-pilot's seat. Major Redden's flak helmet came so far down over his ears that about all I could see was his mustache and a

glimpse of a very white face behind it. He was fighting the controls with both hands and trying desperately to feather No. 3 prop. I put on McHood's headset and tried to contact the formation. We now were alone and headed roughly in a 90-degree direction. Fortunately, Redden had enough sense to head due east rather than trying to go immediately south - a heading which would have put us over the dreadful Moravska Ostrava and into continuing flak. We were temporarily out of the flak zone, but we had lost enough altitude that we were in clouds and I didn't think the ship would stay in the air much longer. I watched the altimeter and saw that we were losing altitude at about 1,000 feet per minute. No one had seen our bombs hit but that seemed unimportant now. It looked like the fire in No. 3 engine was out, but I couldn't be sure. I felt useless, and Redden was left to fight the ship himself.

"We were at about 15,000 feet when I called to the crew to be sure to strap on their parachutes. We didn't know how much longer we could stay in the air. One of the gunners from the waist replied that the tail gunner was coming forward to help. Only then did I remember that our tail gunner was Lt. Sol Azar, a rated pilot, new to the 96th Squadron. It was SOP to have a pilot fly as a tail gunner in the ship leading the Group in order to observe the formation and to report lapses in flying to the Group Commander. Azar's progress had been slowed because most of the oxygen back of the cockpit had been shot out and he had to depend on the little green bottles.

"Now all of a sudden we encountered a small burst of flak. It was not heavy or accurate, but at 15,000 feet, I knew it wouldn't be too long before they could zero in on us. The ship's shuddering got worse as we descended into heavier air. I wondered what we would do with McHood if we had to hit the hanky.

"Lib tapped me on the shoulder and when I turned around there was Azar ready to climb into the co-pilot seat and try to help Redden with the controls. I unplugged my headset; my efforts had been useless anyway, and wiggled out of the seat to make room for Azar.

"Back on the catwalk with Liberto and McHood, I could see the leg was beginning to bleed profusely at this lower altitude. The blood no longer was dark but was now very bright red. His face was the color of wood ash, but his lips moved occasionally and he appeared to be clutching at his left breast. I thought perhaps he had been wounded there too, but when I opened his jacket and shirt I found a little black prayer book in his pocket. I took it out and put it in his hands. The book fell open to a dog-eared place and I could see Mac was trying to say something. It was then I realized he was Catholic and he was giving himself the last rites he had already marked for just such an emergency. I felt utterly helpless.

"We broke out of the second barrage of light flak and Redden at last succeeded in feathering the No. 3 prop. With that success, most of the violent shaking ceased. I crawled back into the nose and could see that the oil coming from No. 3 had congealed on the cowlings and had frozen into a heavy black tar. The windmilling prop had gotten red hot and torque had caused most of the ship's shuddering. Now we felt only a slight vibration. I asked Toton where we were, but he merely shrugged his shoulders. I looked at the compass and saw that we were heading 120 degrees. Although we had two feathered props, old 'FRANKIE' still had two good engines and was holding her own as far as air speed was concerned. Our indicated airspeed was 135. Although we normally used oxygen at anything over 12,000 feet, I figured I could risk a little, so I grabbed a portable and went back to the catwalk.

"Lib had kept McHood supplied with mixed oxygen, and we now disconnected that and now put him on the navigator's pure stuff. The wound looked worse than ever because it was bleeding more profusely. We cut away more of this pants and tightened the tourniquet. I thought McHood was trying to talk and he appeared to be awake enough to feel what must have been horrible pain. I did not see how he could live with such a huge wound nor did I want to see him suffering. Not knowing what else to do, I grabbed another first aid packet and gave him another shot of morphine. It was not until days later that I realized that probably there had not been enough time for the first one to take full effect. We

moved him so that his feet were slightly higher than his head and wrapped him with an extra coat that Lib had always carried. By this time, Mac had lapsed into unconsciousness, either from the shock or the morphine.

"I went back to the nose and could now see the ground occasionally through the broken clouds. There were some rivers that showed against the snow, but I couldn't really find any landmarks. I called Weinman, but he could only report that his set had been inoperative since soon after the I.P. He too had been watching our heading and airspeed, and he figured we were still over occupied territory but were heading for Poland.

"We both encouraged Redden to continue 120 degrees, and we kept that heading for approximately 20 minutes. Visibility got worse the farther east we came, and we were down around 5,000 feet before Toton and I located a town named Rzeszow on the map. I didn't know how the hell anyone could pronounce it, but there was a railroad running through it as well as another coming up from the south. Redden circled the town and ordered Lib to fire the emergency flares. I could see no landing strip, and none showed on the map. The Major decided to try a crash landing. I know he figured that with the wounded McHood aboard, there wasn't much else he could do.

"McHood couldn't be moved, and I offered to stay with him in the nose, but that was foolhardy, and the Major ordered all of us, except the three in the cockpit, to go into the radio room and follow prescribed ditching procedures. I put one last tourniquet on McHood's leg, said goodbye to Lib, not sure whether I'd ever see him again, and went to the rear.

"There were six of us huddled on the floor, hands behind our heads and facing the rear. We went around the town once more, and then Redden made what could only be described as a beautiful crash landing. We never knew how he did it with only two good engines and the wheels up. It was a tribute to his judgment, skill, and to the durability of that old reliable B-17. As soon as the fuselage hit the ground, it sounded like a giant can opener was ripping through the belly of the plane; dust and dirt coming up through the closed bomb bay almost choked us there in the radio room. We didn't crash any structures, however, and the ship finally skidded to a noisy stop. We climbed out and saw probably two dozen men running towards us. Many were in strange uniforms and some apparently were civilians. We saw no weapons in their hands and we hoped they were friendly. That had watched our flares and our descent. They jabbered excitedly in a tongue I knew was not German. At first, I supposed they were Russians, but they seemed friendly enough and seemed to be trying to help us. When two came to me I led them to the nose of the ship, now resting on the ground nearly six feet lower than its usual position, and by gestures tried to make them understand that we had a wounded man still there. One of the men made a chopping motion with his hand, and then I remembered the emergency axe hanging in the radio compartment. I rushed back to get it and when I returned one of the strangers took it from me and chopped a hole in the plexi-glass. By this time a makeshift ambulance had appeared, and the attendants brought out a stretcher.

"The first job was to get Mac out of the ship through the cutaway nose, and I must say these men did it fast and efficiently. About all I could understand was an occasional word of 'doktor.' As soon as McHood was put on the stretcher and taken away, we quickly surveyed the damage. The tips of every prop were bent at almost right angles from the force of hitting the ground and the ship was riddled with flak holes. The biggest hole was the gaping one forward of the right cockpit - the one that almost killed McHood.

"We had drilled so many times on ditching and survival procedures that now my thoughts returned to the secret bomb sight. Even though these people seemed friendly, I thought I ought to destroy the Norden. So I climbed back into the nose and fired three shots from my .45 into the rate and gyroscope of the sight. Then I took the axe and went back to the radio room and slashed away at the IFF - an identification signal that was changed daily - and the innards of Mike Weinman's APQ15 radar

set. That too was supposed to be highly secret at the time. This destruction didn't seem to sit too well with the strangers, but they made no attempt to interfere or stop me.

"Outside more people had gathered, examining our wrecked ship. There was a lot of talk, but it was all very confusing. I knew only a few words of German, and I don't believe anyone else in our crew knew a foreign language. Mike Weinman was Jewish and had remembered a surprising amount of Yiddish he had learned as a child. He whispered to me he was sure these people were Polish. One of them seemed to take charge and beckoned for us to get aboard an old Model A truck. We chugged through the town and were brought to a home that seemed to serve as headquarters for a small band of Russian soldiers. At least I thought they were Russian from their tunics and the insignia boards on their shoulders. We couldn't tell their rank, but they kept calling one 'Myor.' He was short, dark, and evidently the one in command. We soon grasped that he was a Major, and before long we were referring to him as Major Gromyko. From what we could gather we were safely in Polish territory and about 25 miles behind the front lines.

"We were given some head cheese and dark bread, and then our friends brought a village woman to us. She told us in good English that her name was Catherine Bandelak and that she had lived in Pennsylvania. She could speak English, Polish, and Russian. For several days she was to be our interpreter, guide, and go-between. In those roles she was invaluable in helping us to understand where we were and what would be our future.

"That night five of us were kept at Catherine's house. I stayed at Catherine's. We were fed again, and the Russians insisted in sharing their vodka with us. It was my first taste of this strong liquor. Language problems disappeared when we would raise a glass of vodka and say, 'Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin.' 'Roosisky-Americansky,' or 'Hitler Kaput!' By ten o'clock that night we were all very tired and sleepy.

"December 27. We awakened this morning still tired after our exhaustion of yesterday and from four sleeping crossways in Catherine's bed. We breakfasted at her house and ate more head cheese, bread, butter, and ersatz coffee. Even at breakfast we drank a little more vodka - almost under duress.

"After breakfast the Major came over and we all chugged out in the old Model A again to look at our plane. It was wrecked even more than our hasty examination the day before had indicated. There were flak holes from the rudder to the chopped plexi-glass in the nose. Two engines were completely ruined. Oil had leaked even from the two good engines, and we could see the fire damage to No. 3. The control surfaces had been so riddled we now understood why the ship had shaken so violently. Someone produced a camera so we took several pictures of the plane, of us around it, and among our new Polish and Russian friends.

"From the field we went to the Russian emergency hospital to see McHood. His leg had been amputated just above the knee during the night. The Russian doctor told us in broken English that he had been given two transfusions of whole blood. McHood looked very bad, in some ways worse than when I had last seen him, but he was conscious and tried to talk. We all spoke to him for a few minutes, wished him the best, and left him most of our cigarettes and candy rations. We didn't know whether he would live, but he was in better hands than he had been in the ship. I knew nothing of the hospital care he would get, but at least he had gotten two transfusions that had kept him alive.

"We went back to Catherine's house and ate bread and cheese again. The bread is very dark, heavy, and moist. I like it. Again, we were given plenty of vodka. I think it must be the Polish pastime.

"That night the Russian Major took Redden and me to his house. The Russians are very rank conscious. We drank more vodka, and soon an orderly brought in a small wash basin filled with what looked to me like raw fish about the size of bait minnows back home. The Russian said they were 'shishtafki' or at least something like that. I couldn't pronounce the word nor did I relish the thought of eating those helpless little creatures. Evidently they were appetizers, for Major Gromyko showed us

how to place one on our tongue and then hastily gulp down a shot of vodka. Even with the vodka, I couldn't get a fish down; my tongue could feel the scales. Later on, we were served pork loaf, chicken, bread, and more vodka. Our hosts are trying to impress us with their hospitality now that they are convinced we are not White Russians. It wasn't long before I began to feel the liquor and I knew I would get sick if I drank much more. I think Redden and I pretended to be more soused than we really were.

"The Russian Major had a little Victrola and some records. When they started playing Russian music, it wasn't long before they wanted to dance. There were no women so men had to dance with one another and, as I said, Russians are very rank conscious. Redden, as our ranking officer, was paired with his Russian counterpart, and they did quite a dance together until the Russian began slipping into the traditional Russian bear dance, then Redden bowed out. Unfortunately, I was paired with the only Russian Captain. He must have been 6 foot 4 inches with weight to match. He insisted on swinging me around the floor, but when his gyrations began getting a little too strenuous, Gromyko growled something and my dancing partner subsided and went in a corner with his vodka.

"Later, about midnight, Catherine brought up waist gunner Merritt and Carey, the radio man, who also slept with us at her house. Again, it was four in the bed.

"The next day only Redden and I went to the hospital to see McHood. He was about the same, no better nor worse. We didn't stay long, but we bumped into two American G.I.s who had been looking for us. They were stationed in the area on some kind of duty. They gave us a little wine and said they were arranging for us to be flown to Poltava. In one or two days we would be at this Russian Air Base that had been used in shuttle bombing earlier in the war. There we would get clean clothes and a comfortable bed. We took the wine but accepted their promises with a grain of salt.

"December 28. We spent the night at Catherine's house. She has two small babies. Liberto enjoys bouncing the cute little tykes on his knee. Catherine tells us a C-47 is to come in and take us over to Russia, but she warns us in conspiratorial tones not to trust the Russians. Many people disappear within that vast land and are never heard from again. She claims we will be well treated, however, because the Polish Red Cross has been notified of our safety. As a result, our commanders eventually will get the message, and the Russians knowing that would never dare harm us. It is evident that she doesn't like the Rooskies.

"This morning we awakened ready to leave and with a healthy respect for Russian vodka and whiskey. They also served us a little different liquor in smaller glasses; it was called slivovitz and was really fiery and potent. Catherine told me it was plum brandy and to watch out for it. Her warning came a little too late.

"The Russian Major came in and told us that a C-47, he called it a 'Dooglas,' would be arriving and take us to Poltava. He expressed pleasure at meeting us and was sure that together, Russians, with a little American help, would soon end the war. We kept waiting for the 'Dooglas' but noon came and no ship in sight. Catherine fixed us some more food and also made us a snack to carry with us in case weather forced us down somewhere. Two other Russian officers joined us and gave us a few small souvenirs. We exchanged insignia with them. It seemed to me there was a lot of boasting on their part of their national strength. Nearly every Russian officer we meet soon asks: 'Do you think America and Russia will ever have to fight?' The question is so strange and seems so out of place when we are supposed to be Allies, but it is evident that topic occupies their thoughts much more than it does ours. The Russians ask many political questions; probably this is their way of interrogating us. At least, that is what we surmised and we tried to evade most of their inquiries.

"Late in the afternoon, the Model A chugged up and we boarded it. With a ceremonious goodbye we headed for an auxiliary airport where we expected to meet our C-47. Before we could enter this small airport, we were stopped and interrogated by Russian intelligence officers. One of them, a

Lieutenant named Weinman, by coincidence the same name as our Mike. The Russian Weinman is also Jewish and can speak Yiddish. Since Mike could struggle a little with that language we began to communicate a little more freely. He told us that we would be sent to this camp and that our home base in Italy would be notified of our safety.

"We came to this airfield and were dismayed to find that this 'Dooglas' had not arrived. At the field our Russian escorts, we don't know whether they are guards or not, brought us to a new home. It is a dug-out or enlarged trench that can house a couple dozen men. Late today 12 more Americans joined us. Most of them are from B-24s that also have made emergency landings somewhere along this section of the eastern front.

"The dug-out in which we are to live is underground and is covered by a large mound of earth. The stalls are separated by heavy planks, and each stall is filled with clean straw. There is a wood burning stove made from a 50 gal. drum at each end of the dug-out. At night there are two of us in each stall. We're warm enough considering the circumstances, but I envy Mike Weinman that large green parka he somehow managed to scrounge back in sunny Italy and had enough foresight to carry on the plane with him. It also gets pretty smoky in this dug-out although there are small chimneys extending above the ground from each of the stoves. At night the guards, or orderlies, put a few lumps of coal in the fires. There is a little water for washing, but it is icy cold and there is no soap or towel.

"The next day a few other downed airmen joined us, and our dug-out is beginning to get crowded. Tonight we are bedding down three to a stall. That isn't too bad though, for the extra man gives us more warmth. The main thought in everyone's mind is the concern our relatives must feel if they get reports we are missing. We wonder if they will be notified of our safety. We all are in good health and are being cared for as conditions allow. We are getting plenty to eat and too much vodka to drink. We all would like to be certain that any MIA reports would be corrected, but we have no way of knowing whether that will happen. By this time we were joking about events of the 26th and everything that happened on the fateful day.

"December 29th. Still waiting for the C-47. The weather was closed in and is no better.

"The next day we awakened tired and stiff from our cramped beds and cold. A three-inch snow has fallen and has blanketed the surrounding area. The temperature is 10 degrees. Our breakfast today was as heavy as a full course American supper. A barber came early this morning and we all got a crude shave. The guards also brought us a tub of tepid water; one man dribbles it from a cup into another man's hands. This is a pretense at washing. At least the ritual awakens us and makes us feel somewhat cleaner.

"Some of us walked over to the Russian planes sitting on the ground and tried to talk to the crews. We are quite an oddity, but it is obvious that they have been warned to have little to do with us. Whenever we try to start a conversation with our limited words and gestures, a Russian officer immediately joins the group and takes over.

"About noon today, nine more Americans strolled in. They are from another B-17 crew that had also been on the Blechhammer raid. Their ship had been shot down, but the entire crew parachuted safely and had been kept in hiding since the 26th.

"Today, December 30, shortly after breakfast, the big news happened when the C-47 arrived. We had it surrounded before it had completely stopped and the pilot had cut the engines. An American engineer, an American doctor, and some enlisted personnel climbed out. We were all happy to see them, especially when they unloaded a case of cigarettes and other rations. Tobacco was doled out to eager hands amidst an excited jargon of English, Russian, and Polish voices.

"The American doctor wanted to visit McHood and another wounded man, so Major Redden went to town with him. Later that night, when they returned, Redden reported that McHood was improving and looked somewhat better.

"The C-47 could take 15 healthy men in addition to the slightly wounded or sick. The all important question was who was to leave and who were the unlucky ones to remain. Three crews were represented - nine men from two crews and 12 from another. We decided to use coins and odd man out. Since the Major was in town, I and two Captains from the other crews flipped. All crowded tensely around us and we carefully turned our coins over, one at a time. It was all three heads and we all sighed. We flipped again, two heads and a tail. I had the tail so I lost. Naturally the boys claimed that I let them down.

"By this time it was quite late and the C-47 had to remain here. That meant more men in the dug-out. The air that night was really dense both from stories and the heavy breathing of men who did get to sleep.

"December 31, we awakened and shortly after breakfast we gathered around to see the C-47 take off. They did so with the dubious promise that in two or three days they would return for us. There were 17 of us left in the dug-out. Tonight is New Year's Eve, and naturally everyone is recalling similar holidays in the past. The Douglas left us two cases of 10 in 1 rations, which Lib and I carried to the dug-out. Inside the cases were crackers, jam, butter, cheese, and a rice pudding which is my favorite. At supper we drank one or two small toasts and sang a few American songs. We returned to the dug-out and sang a little and then tried to sleep.

"The next morning, January 1, 1945, Major Redden and some of the other fellows awakened with acute cases of Russian G.I.s. At least we are calling it Russian. This was New Year's Day and five of the boys went to the only church still open in the nearby village. Of course the rituals and songs were all in Polish so they didn't understand it. Three of us went for a long walk. We encountered a Polish gent who wanted to know if he could safely write to his sister somewhere in America. I never caught just what were his great fears - whether from Russian censors or exaggerated stories of Al Capone in Chicago. Nearly everyone we meet claims to have relatives of some sort in America. It must be a great place; I hope to get there sometime soon. Tonight we can easily hear the guns from the front.

"January 2, 1945. This morning we awakened and went to breakfast. Mike and I had a separate meal which included real coffee for a change. Afterwards, we came back and the Major and I went with the Russian Weinman over to the airfield and talked to the commanding officers. We exchanged compliments, cigarettes, and a lot of bragging. The officers treated us well but they are real braggarts. The Russians characterize the nations by means of various gestures. England is the old man with a beard; Italy is a nation of violin players; Russia and America are young giants with large biceps. We brought the barber back with us and we all got a shave and a haircut.

"January 3, 1945. Today was a repetition of those already passed. We've also bartered among the Russians a little of our personal goods. The Russians are really envious over my colt .45 and I've been tempted to swap it for one of their 9mm Luger, but the Captain I was dealing with told me he would be shot if he ever lost the side arm the government had issued him. Whenever we got together with two or more officers, they are immediately joined by a civilian. I'm told he is a political representative - a kind of liaison between the government and the military. I notice that the ranking officers always seem to defer to advice and consent from one of those fellows. Strange.

"After lunch, Redden, Duchek and I went for another walk. We had just reached the village when we looked up and saw an Amerikansky C-47 circling the field. Our hopes soared, only to fall again when we learned the plane was not for us. However, the new faces were encouraging and the plane's arrival meant that flying was picking up. This three-man Russian crew brought us additional rations which included playing cards, and these helped pass the time.

"The next morning the good news happened. The C-47 arrived here about 10:30. In a very bitter wind we carried our meager belongings out to the ship. Then we climbed aboard and had to wait nearly an hour before the pilot was satisfied we could take off. After take-off, we headed for the famous

Poltava, the town we had heard so much about and, by this time, we were anxious to see. On the entire trip I don't think the pilot got much above an altitude of 250 feet. Although I always enjoyed a good buzz job, I don't care for it with an unknown pilot and a strange ship.

"We stopped in a town named Zamosk for about an hour in order to check on a B-24 which had been downed and was possibly to be flown out. The ship was in such bad shape, however, that the pilots all decided it would have to remain there.

"We buzzed on east for about three and a half hours and had fair flying weather. About 15 minutes before our ETA for Poltava, the clouds settled right down on the ground. We tried to get under them, but even this daring pilot couldn't make it. When we reached what we were told was Poltava, it was so socked in we couldn't pick up the landing field. This crazy Russky pilot kept buzzing and dodging trees and radio wires. There was no need to be flying so low among the flocks of ground birds that sounded like light flak as we flew through them. After half an hour of this foolhardy flying, we came to an alternate base 40 miles away. We landed at this cold, bleak alternate - a place called Mirgorod. After standing in a rough wind, we loaded on a truck and were taken to a Russian Major's office. Two C-54s had also landed at this base. They were regular ATC crews, and one of them carried a USO unit. The unit included four American girls. The girls were the first females we had seen for some time and, of course, every man in several of our crews were vying for their attention.

"Last night we had a plentiful supper at a little house that was to serve as our quarters. It had electricity, but the single light in each room hangs from a cord on the ceiling, and the light is turned on at the bulb or from an old-fashioned black switch on the wall. There are beds, however, and these beds actually have sheets on them. After our stay in the straw, these sheets will be welcome. We are disappointed that we could not make Poltava, and most of the night we lay shivering with the cold. The sheets weren't as warm as the straw. If there's heat in this old house, we can't feel it. At least we have our C-47, so all we need is proper weather to let us continue.

"The next morning we awakened, tired, stiff and eager to get going. The weather dampened our spirits as we stared outside in a low, solid cloud bank. We dressed and splashed a little cold water on our faces; I don't see how that water can be so cold and not freeze. Then we went to a very heavy breakfast; sauerkraut, pickles, hamburger, fried barley called groats, tea and C ration crackers - not a typical American breakfast. Afterwards we walked to a nearby Russian market. This place was crowded with poorly clothed people, most of them looked underfed despite their remnants of thick clothing. Several were roasting chestnuts over charcoal and wanted us to buy a bag. Redden and I had a photo taken as did most of the other fellows. The pictures were taken by a woman who reminded me of my grandmother Anderson with a shawl over her head. The woman had a little box camera that looked as if it had been the original Kodak, but the picture she took wasn't so bad. Redden with his mustache and I look like a couple of bonafide Russkies. We got into a misunderstanding over the number of rubles for the picture, and I think we overpaid the ole gal.

"At 1500 we decided it was clear enough to try to take off, so we boarded our truck and went out to the plane. We climbed aboard and after a long time in warming those cold engines, we took off. En route to Poltava, we again hugged the ground, and the weather was similar to that of the previous day. We maintained a good air speed and were over level ground. We really dusted the weeds that occasionally struggled up through the snow. We think we have found the original mad Russian! When we reached Poltava, all were able to see the field, and everyone was jubilant. The pilot raked it so sharply over a building that our left wingtip nearly scraped the roof. Presumably he wanted to give us a thrill and show off for his Americansky passengers.

"We were courteously received at Poltava. We were given a good de-lousing, clean clothes, and a wonderful hot shower. That shower was so welcome it seemed one of the highlights of my life!

"On January 6, we were scheduled to take off for Tehran, but the weather closed in. The next day we awoke and strolled over to the Officers Club, and after lunch eight of us drove through Poltava in an open weapons carrier. The town is about the size of Kokoma, spread out and gutted either by demolition squads or German bombings. There is not a single large building of any sort intact. That night we went to a USO show - the first ever, we were told, to come to Poltava, and later to a dance at the Officers Club.

"The next day was uneventful. We sat around the base but the weather is still against us. Another sleepless night.

"The following day we arose at 5:00 a.m. and were told we probably would be leaving soon. We had a breakfast of eggs and meat. Shortly after daylight, we climbed into a cold, C-46. At eight o'clock dawn was breaking; we took off and headed for Tehran, Iran. The weather was undercast most of the way, but flying was smooth with the exception of occasional rough air over the mountains. The undercast began breaking up somewhere over northern Iran and we got our first glimpse of that barren region.

"We reached Tehran about nine hours later and put down at the ATC base there. Trucks took us to our quarters where we showered, shaved, and enjoyed real luxuries.

"We went to the Officers Club where I saw more Colonels, a few Generals, and other high ranking officers than I've seen in three years past service. I can't understand why they need so many high ranking officers at a remote base like this. We enjoyed a fine meal beautifully served by pretty Polish girls. The Officers Club here is spacious and really fancy. There are spotless tablecloths on the dining tables, three forks, two knives, and one spoon for both lunches and dinners. All kinds of booze is available.

"The next morning we went to the PX and bought a few small items. Most of us don't have much money. The PX is so well stocked it makes me think of Sears Roebuck or Marshall Fields in Chicago. We then had lunch at the club. Late in the afternoon we came down to the airfield and boarded another C-46 flown by an ATC crew. We've learned that our next stop is Cairo. We took off and reached Cairo at 2100 hours, very tired.

"The next day we arose late - almost noon - after our arduous flight and trouble getting billeted. It was nearly 0200 when we finally crawled into our beds. We're told that we will be leaving for Italy tonight, but will have time enough to go into Cairo and look around. Most of us went to Heliopolis, a suburb of Cairo. There we bought boots and souvenirs.

"We returned to the air base and bumped into Harry Grossnickle of Manchester. He had some time to kill before his plane left for America. He's a Finance Officer stationed in Cairo. We went into Cairo to the famous Sheppard Hotel; we both wanted to say we had been to Sheppard's. Harry promised to call my Mother and tell her I was safe.

"About 4:00 a.m., 20 of us boarded a C-47 and taxied out for take-off. The right engine had an RPM drop, and we taxied back to the parking stand. We spent a very uncomfortable three hours waiting before they finally told us our flight would have to be canceled. Back to the barracks and bed.

"The next day was uneventful, and we slept away most of it. Then at about midnight, we came to the terminal again. At 2:30 a.m. we climbed aboard another C-47, took off at 3:00 a.m., and headed for a stop at Benghazi. We stayed there only briefly for fuel and a maintenance check of some kind. We didn't leave the plane's area and soon were headed north over the blue Mediterranean toward Italy.

"We arrived back in Foggia that same day, and I'll never forget the warm smile that greeted me from Bob McCook when I entered my old tent. After the final dismal stories had been reported about how we were last seen on fire and falling rapidly, all kinds of rumors had filtered back to our base. We had all been killed. We had parachuted and been captured. Some of us had escaped and were roaming around Germany or Poland. Finally, word had been relayed that we were safe. As lumpy as it may be,

my cot here in this cozy tent among my old friends seems like a bit of paradise. I suppose tomorrow I'll find out more about my future."

LINZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 339 - DECEMBER 27, 1944

Korneuburg, Austria Oil Refineries were the primary target but diverted to Marshalling Yards at Linz and only 16 aircraft dropped 160, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the target by PFF with unobserved results. Ten aircraft dropped their bombs at 48-47N - 14-50E because of an accidental release of bombs by the lead plane. Two aircraft dropped 20, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Villach, Austria visually with hits observed in the Yards. There were three early returns. Flak at Linz was heavy, intense and accurate. 2nd Lt. Woodrow W. Abbott, pilot, was lightly wounded by flak.

REGENSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 340 - DECEMBER 28, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off and 27 aircraft dropped 312, 500-lb. GP bombs on Oil Storage Tanks at Regensburg. Bombing was visual with hits reported on the target. Flak was heavy, slight, and inaccurate. One aircraft dropped 8, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yard at Salzburg, Austria visually with hits reported on the Yard. No injuries, no losses.

CASTELFRANCO/VENETO, ITALY/UDINE, ITALY - MISSION NO. 341 - DECEMBER 29, 1944

Twenty-eight aircraft took off to bomb Marshalling Yards at Innsbruck but 12 aircraft dropped 144, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Locomotive Depot at Castelfranco and 16 aircraft dropped 187, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Locomotive Repair Depot at Udine. Both targets were reported to have been hit. Flak at the targets resulted in damage to 27 aircraft, and also resulted in the death of S/Sgt. James W. Thompson, TG, from the 20th Squadron, and slight wounds to 2nd Lt. Daniel Jackel, N, 1st Lt. Wilbur J. Tepo, Jr., CP, 1st Lt. O. J. Nastoupil, P, and Cpl. W. L. Gillman, RW.

The end of 1944 found a great improvement over 1943. Living conditions had improved. Food was more plentiful and of a greater variety. Cokes and beer were now a part of the PX rations. Officers now had a splendid clubhouse and all the Squadrons had permanent mess halls and enlisted men's club houses. Still, it had been a long 21 months for most of the ground personnel, and war's end still seemed far away.