

# 17

## **Operations: January/February, 1945**

**V**ERONA, ITALY/PADUA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 342 - JANUARY 4, 1945  
Twenty-eight aircraft took off with 15 aircraft dropping 160, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Porto Nuova Marshalling Yards in Verona by offset bombing with the target area hit. Eleven aircraft dropped 130, 500-lb. GP bombs on Marshalling Yards at Padua, Italy visually with the target well hit. Flak was heavy, moderate, and accurate. No injuries, no losses. Two aircraft aborted.

### **LINZ, AUSTRIA/KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 343 - JANUARY 8, 1945**

Twenty-eight aircraft took off with 19 aircraft dropping 190, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Main Station at Linz by PFF with unobserved results. Eight aircraft dropped 78, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt, Austria by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate, and inaccurate. No injuries, no losses.

### **NON MISSION - JANUARY 10, 1945**

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - A/C #44-6350 - "HELEN BELLE" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Leonard (NMI) Waldman, 0-1578004, P.	(DED)
2nd Lt.	Clayton L. Stenwedel, 0-764151, CP.	(DED)
Major	Roy V. Covington, 0-909719	(DED) *
S/Sgt.	Eric G. Page, 36521643	(DED) *
S/Sgt.	Clarence P. Junnisson, 36199446	(DED) *
S/Sgt.	Arthur J. Brown, 6571690	(DED) *
Cpl.	Earl J. Freed, 35399711	(DED) *
	A Captain, Italian Army, name unknown	(DED)

\*Major Covington and the enlisted men were assigned to the 324th Service Group.

The following report was submitted to the 15th Air Force Headquarters, 14 January 1945.

"On 10 January 1945, at 1045 local time (C-47 #42-10097) departed Belgrade in company with a B-17 #350 belonging to the 429th Squadron, 2nd Bomb Group.

"The B-17 had been repaired in Belgrade and had no navigator nor navigational equipment aboard and the Command set worked only on the 'D' channel. It was planned that they fly on our wing back to Italy.

"At Belgrade, the weather was better than it had been for the preceding four or five days with a ceiling of approximately 1,000 feet, broken and eight or nine-tenths covered. Lt. Waldman checked the weather forecast at the airport and told us only that it seemed all right, that the ceiling, visibility, etc. in Italy were suitable for landing. I do not know who the forecasting agency was, British or American, and I do not know what information, if any, was given concerning weather conditions en route.

"After leaving Belgrade we climbed over the first layer of clouds to 6,000 feet and headed slightly southwest looking for a break in the solid mass of stratocumulus and cumulus clouds to the west, which would enable us to fly a more direct route to Foggia, since neither we nor the B-17 had much of a safety margin where gasoline was concerned. We proceeded on the above-mentioned course as far as Uzice (43-50N - 19-52E), but without seeing any breaks in the West and then turned on a course of 160 degrees to 43-18N - 20-38E where we picked up the river system that went south to Metkovic and the pass to the coast. We attempted to go down under the clouds and fly the river valley, but found that clouds went clear down to the ground.

"Up to this point the weather had been broken and we had been able to see the B-17 at all times and the ground at frequent intervals. But we could see that from here on the clouds were covered and the entire field of vision to the East, South, and West. They also seemed to go up to well over 20,000 feet. In view of these conditions and before proceeding, Lt. Howard, my pilot, called Lt. Waldman and advised him it looked impossible to go under, or around, and asked him whether he wanted to turn back to Belgrade. In both Lt. Howard's and my opinion this was the point of no return. Lt. Waldman elected to continue on and we began to climb on a course of 110 degrees. This was the last time I personally saw the B-17.

"We climbed to 5,000 feet encountering light snow and icing conditions until I saw the pass at 45-45N - 21-00E through a break in the clouds and advised the pilot to turn West towards the coast on a course of 200 degrees. Lt. Howard saw the B-17 momentarily, contacted it on the radio, advised of our change of course, and saw the B-17 bank to the right. This was the last time that anyone either saw or heard from the aircraft.

"Between the last mentioned position (42-45N - 21-00E) and where we broke out on the coast (48-18N - 18-53E), we were in slushy snow and heavy icing conditions for approximately 45 to 50 minutes and were forced to use our deicers steadily.

"From the coast we proceeded to Bari, where Lt. Howard immediately notified the Big Fence and Regional Flying Control."

LEONARD B. KORNFIELD, 1st, Lt. AC 0-712108

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 344 - JANUARY 15, 1945**

Twenty-five aircraft dropped 287, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Northeast Marshalling Yards in Vienna by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate resulting in serious wound to T/Sgt. J. A. Taylor, LW, and S/Sgt. Dorsey F. Back, TG, both of the 20th Squadron.

1st. Lt. John D. Sisson was a Bombardier assigned to the 429th Squadron. September 20, 1992: "My story begins in Pittsfield, MA where I was born and brought up. During the 1920s and 30s, I lived next door to the Palme family. The father and mother were from Vienna, Austria; he an engineer and employed by GE in Pittsfield until his death in 1947. His family, however, remained in the family residence and were there all during the war. During my adolescence and young manhood, I was a close friend of that family and their children.

"I enlisted and went off to war. In 1944 I was assigned to the 429th Squadron in Foggia, Italy as a Bombardier. I ultimately became Squadron Bombardier and finally, Group Bombardier. We flew to Vienna more times than I care to remember as it was one of our most difficult targets. On one mission (perhaps #344, Vienna NE Marshalling Yards), I flew as lead Bombardier. The bomb plots from our Group show a fine dispersion with the majority in the target area. Because we pattern bombed, some fell in areas adjoining the Marshalling Yards. The Palme family home was located three blocks from the yards and bombs from my formation destroyed their home. Mr. Palme discovered this on

examination of charts and bomb plots I brought home with me, confirming that his home had been hit on the precise date of my flying that mission. By good fortune, his father and mother and other family members were safely located in a bomb shelter and not at home at the time of the bomb strikes. The confirmation came from a letter his mother wrote to him months after it was first written, but it provided the date and time of the hits.

"Oh yes, the family and I are still friends."

#### **BROD, YUGOSLAVIA - MISSION NO. 345 - JANUARY 19, 1945**

Forty-one aircraft dropped 501, 500-lb. RDX bombs and 4, M26 propaganda bombs on the North Marshalling Yards at Brod. Bombing was visual and the target area was well covered. Flak was heavy, slight, moderate to accurate resulting in light wounds to 1st Lt. C. H. Conley, B, 49th Squadron.

#### **REGENSBURG/ROSENHEIM, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 346 - JANUARY 20, 1945**

At 0840 hours, 28 aircraft took off to bomb Oil Storage at Regensburg. Fifteen aircraft dropped 551, 100-lb. GP bombs on the target by PFF with unobserved results. Due to a bomb rack malfunction, ten aircraft diverted to Rosenheim Marshalling Yards and dropped 369, 100-lb. GP bombs visually with hits reported in the target area. One aircraft dropped 38, 100-lb. GP bombs on a Railroad Bridge at 47-46N - 12-28E visually with the target report as hit. Two aircraft aborted with one aircraft, #44-8168, reported missing. Flak at the primary target was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate. No injuries, one aircraft missing.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-8168, "FLYING HOME" - 49TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	William J. Wittlinger, Jr., 0-704996, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Hill W. Bohannon, 0-626479, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Samuel (NMI) Aboulfia, 0-206506, N.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Chester C. Lollar, 34802773, TOG.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Warren C. Ganue, 12022317, U/T.	(POW)
Cpl.	Edward W. Pullis, 12138777, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Thomas G. Schwarzlose, 36689315, R/W.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	George T. McCluskey, 18116758, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	John (NMI) Mikita, 36034443, T/G.	(POW)
Cpl.	James R. Harrington, 14193807, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 2nd Lt. Nowell M. Terrell, Pilot of B-17 #637, after the mission: "B-17 #168 made a radio call and said he was at 16,000 feet with two engines out and losing altitude at 300 feet per minute, and said he could possibly get across the Alps. Last seen to left of course holding reasonable altitude and heading in the direction of Yugoslavia."

German reports record this crew as POWs and confined to prison camps.

American reports show this entire crew repatriated after the war.

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA/GRAZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 347 - JANUARY 21, 1945**

Forty aircraft took off to bomb the Schwechat Oil Refinery in Vienna. Twenty aircraft attacked this target dropping 198, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, slight to intense, and accurate. Fifteen aircraft dropped 143, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Graz, Austria by PFF with unobserved results. One aircraft dropped 10, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt, Austria visually with hits on the tracks reported. Three aircraft were early returns. 2nd Lt.

J. F. Boyle, B, 96th Squadron, and Cpl. Thomas E. King, LW, 20th Squadron, were lightly wounded by flak. B-17 #44-6606, 20th Squadron, is missing.

**MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6606 - 20TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Alvin L. Notheis, 0-773208, P.	(RET)
F/O	George L. Bills, T-4386, CP.	(RET)
F/O	Paul (NMI) Stephens, T-129762, N.	(RET)
1st Lt.	William T. Scott, Jr., 0-552901, B.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Joseph (NMI) Koden, 16035714, U/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Robert K. Train, 36894479, L/T.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Paul D. Surprenant, 39699651, R/W.	(RET)
Sgt.	Victor A. Lennon, 32371630, L/W.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Lewis H. Waters, 35893477, T/G.	(RET)
S/Sgt.	Robert G. Cheney, 32547489, R/O.	(RET)

Report regarding A/C #44-6606 from 2nd Bombardment Headquarters, 22 February 1945: En route to the target, engines were detonating and using excessive fuel. After leaving target, pilot discovered that there was insufficient gasoline to return to home base, that the oxygen system was out, that two men of the crew had been wounded, this pilot headed for emergency field at Debreczen, Hungary. Because of uncertainty of position and condition of two wounded men, pilot crash landed in an open field at 47-47N - 21-00E. When aircraft crossed the Russian front lines, it was met by six Russian fighters, one of which fired warning shots. Crew held fire; pilot rocked the wings; fighters left. Aircraft was slightly damaged in crash landing.

Russians, one of which was a doctor, came to the aircraft; the two wounded men were given first aid, and subsequently were taken to a hospital in Mezo Csat, a small town six miles from the field where aircraft was crash-landed. The other men were taken to Russian Area Commandant's Headquarters in Tisza Kesci, 47-48N - 21-00E, approximately six miles north of the field. After six days, wounded men were released from hospital and joined other crew members in Tisza Kesci. All crew members lived in Commandant's quarters, a requisitioned Hungarian home, for 16 days, during which time pilot was arranging with Russians for repair of the aircraft. Such arrangements necessitated several trips to Miskoloz Airdrome; finally Russian engineering personal were transported by truck to Tisza Kesci and repaired the damaged aircraft. A tail wheel from a German aircraft was installed on aircraft. The entire crew took off for Miskoloz airdrome where aircraft was serviced and 750 gallons of gasoline was put in tanks. The crew stayed at a local hotel in Miskoloz for five days before they were allowed to take-off; they then flew to their home base, arriving 18 February 1945, they were then sent on 19 February 1945 to Headquarters, Fifteenth Air Force, returning to their unit on 20 February 1945.

S/Sgt. Lewis H. Waters, TG on crew of 1st Lt. Alvin L. Notheis. January 3, 1995: "I graduated from Shortridge H.S. in Indianapolis, IN, in June 1943, and volunteered for the Air Force in August. I was processed through Fort Harrison and sent to Amarillo, A.F. Base for basic training. I passed the test for Air Force Cadets and was scheduled for bombardier training after the college training required. But, my records, along with 11 others, were misplaced and we languished for approximately four and one-half months with little to do. Finally our records were located, but it was too late because the Cadet program was closed. So, the 12 of us were transferred to a temporary assignment called, 'On the Line Training' at Luke A.F. Base, Arizona. There were approximately 250 cadet prospects in this program, and eventually we were all assigned to gunnery training at various bases.



"Our crew assembled at Dyersburg, Tennessee, in August 1944, and we finished training in October, 1944. We picked up our plane in Lincoln, Nebraska and flew to Foggia, Italy via Newfoundland, the Azores, and Africa.

"We didn't have a name for our aircraft until after returning from M.I.A. in Hungary. The rear half of our plane was damaged, so engineers and ground crew replaced the rear section with a camouflaged rear half, and we ended up with a silver front half and brownish green back half, thereby ending up with a plane we called 'HALF BREED.'

"On January 21, 1945, on a mission to Vienna, we had to leave the formation on the 2nd attempt at a bomb run due to a serious lack of oxygen. Because of weather, our only choice was to head east toward Hungary. We passed over a front line German air base and were shot at by German machine guns and 20mm cannon. We were flying at an altitude of approximately 1,500 feet, and we were hit with only two or three bullets, but one 20mm shell entered next to the ball turret and fortunately exploded upward, leaving quite a hole in the upper left side adjacent to the ball turret. Fortunately only two of us were injured, the ball turret gunner, Robert Train, and me. Bob was hit in the back and I had wounds in the hand, leg, and face. It wasn't long before we had to land (the weather was bad), which was in an open, snow-covered field near the little village of Tisza Kesci, Hungary. Upon landing the tail wheel was torn off and the tail section damaged.

"Bob Train and I were taken to a Russian Field Hospital for treatment. Bob was released after three or four days, and I was released after one week. The Russian doctors, all female, didn't try to remove any flak from my leg or face, just cleaned and bandaged the wounds. My transportation back to Tisza Kesci was by horse drawn wagon with me on a bed of straw. We were bivouacked with the Russians in a large house in the center of the village. Our three-week stay with the Russians is a whole other story in itself.

"Romanian mechanics and engineers, with the help of Romanian laborers, repaired our plane, replacing our tail wheel with one taken from a German transport, which was held stationary by timbers bolted together. We took off from the snow covered field and hit a small tree with the tip of our left wing, but able to fly on to Miskoloz, an industrial city about 35 miles away. We stayed there five days before flying back to our base at Foggia.

"I flew my first combat mission, November 1, 1944 to Munich, Germany, then flew my last on April 26, 1945. F/O Stephens was killed on March 15, 1945, on a raid to Ruhland, Germany while flying with another crew. Lt. Notheis stayed in Italy, after the war, flying personnel to various locations. I returned to the States and was discharged October 30, 1945."

#### **MOOSBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 348 - JANUARY 31, 1945**

Forty-two aircraft took off and 39 aircraft dropped 457, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the MOOSBIERBAUM Oil Refineries by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate, and inaccurate. No injuries, no losses. One aircraft attacked a Marshalling Yard at 47-12N - 16-00E, dropping 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs visually with no results given. Two aircraft were early returns.

#### **GRAZ, AUSTRIA/KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 349 - FEBRUARY 1, 1945**

Forty-one aircraft took off to bomb Oil Refineries at MOOSBIERBAUM but were ordered to divert to other targets due to weather. Twenty-one aircraft dropped their 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Graz, Austria. Seven aircraft dropped their bombs on Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt, Austria (one aircraft dropped bombs on both targets). One aircraft dropped its bombs on Marshalling Yards at 47-22N - 15-42E, and one aircraft dropped its bombs on Marshalling Yards 15 miles north of Maribor, Yugoslavia. Results were unobserved on all targets. Flak at Graz was heavy,

slight, and accurate resulting in injuries to 1st Lt. J. J. Meade, N, and 1st Lt. J. M. Grady, B, both of the 20th Squadron. Twelve aircraft aborted, returning their bombs to base.

#### **TRAINING FLIGHT - SAN MARCO, ITALY - 96TH SQUADRON - FEBRUARY 4, 1945**

1st Lt. Richard A. Pinner, 0-1010443, P. (DED)

2nd Lt. Donald W. Waddell, 0-928771, CP. (DED)

Cpl. Nelson A. Nickel, 16152682, UT. (DED)

Cpl. John B. Anastasi, 32491318, R/O. (INJURED)

Reported missing on a routine training flight over Italy, 4 February 1945.

Reported 7 February 1945: 1st Lt. Richard A. Pinner, P, and Lt. Donald W. Waddell, CP, who were reported missing 4 February 1945 on a routine training flight to killed in accident, 4 February 1945, near San Marco, Italy. Multiple fractures, lacerations and burns.

Reported on 8 February, 1945: Cpl. John B. Anastasi, who was reported missing on routine training flight 4 February 1945, to seriously injured to absent sick (LD) 61st Station Hospital, APO 368, 5 February 1945. Diagnosis: Simple fracture of the left leg, compound fracture of right lower leg, and lacerations above the left eye.

Reported on 9 February 1945: Cpl. Nelson A. Nickel, to killed in aircraft accident (LD) 4 February 1945, near San Marco, Italy: compound fracture skull, extensive simple fracture dorsal spine and left femur; flying status Upper Turret Gunner.

February 4, 1945, Sunday. Today I was scheduled to go to the Rest Camp on the Isle of Capri. I was up early and down on the flight line only to find that the flight had been canceled; weather? Back again in the early p.m. and took off for Naples. Arrived there in mid-afternoon, caught a truck to the Rest Camp hotel and checked in. Spent the night there. Up early the next day but boat for Capri didn't leave until early p.m. The day was overcast but crossing was smooth. Checked into the Windsor Hotel. There I met four enlisted crew men from the 96th. S/Sgt. James H. Pewitt, S/Sgt. Franklin Keller, S/Sgt. Ross Sessions, and S/Sgt. Ernest Short were all on the crew of Captain Charles Childs. They were all battle hardened veterans and in need of a break from the exhausting missions they had been flying. For me it was just one break from the frustrations of, now, three years service, 22 months overseas, a recent 'Dear John' letter and the only hope of seeing home was the war's end, which still seemed many months away. Little did they know what lay ahead of them. Pewitt would be seriously wounded February 21st, hospitalized and returned to hospitals in the States. For him the war was over. Keller and Short were flying with Colonel Ryan on the 28th of February when their ship was badly shot up. Ryan, Short and two others were wounded and two men were killed.

The hotel was top drawer, big beds, clean sheets, maid service. Our assigned eating place was the LaPalma Hotel, and here too, fine service, silverware, music, and good food. We wound up that night at Luigi's, drinking Italian champagne, getting a little high. On the way back to the hotel we ran into an Italian who guided us to a place for black market steaks and potatoes. Expensive but very good!

We spent our days roaming the Island and most nights down at Luigi's. One night we went to the Seaside Club to a dance - plenty of Wacs, Red Cross and Italian girls to dance with. Went into the Blue Grotto one day, exciting getting in because of rough water but beautiful to see. Another point of interest was Rudolph Valentino's villa, which had been converted to a club - seems to be a lot of clubs for the men's entertainment. One day we went way up to see the castle (villa?) of Tiberius. One story I remember was of a large room with a window overlooking the rocks and ocean below. Seems that when he got tired of a wife or mistress he had them thrown out that window. How strange you remember insignificant things. This same day we were riding way up to Tiberius' castle and we passed a man riding a donkey. A few paces behind plodded a woman carrying a large log on her shoulders. It

must have been ten or twelve inches in diameter and six to eight feet long. This behavior seemed to be the norm in Latin countries; women were oppressed.

We sailed back to the mainland on the 11th of February. It was a drizzly, windy day. The water was rough and many were sick. We fellows had abstained from drinking the night before so had no trouble. Upon arrival we were trucked to the Rest Camp Hotel. The weather was bad and our plane had not arrived for us so we spent the night there - cots, what a comedown! On the 12th, the plane came but was not going back until the next day. No beds were available at the hotel so the five of us went out on the town to find a place to bed down for the night in Italian homes. Cigarettes and soap were more in demand than money.

We were up early and went to the Red Cross to eat and then back to the hotel. Our plane was going back so we boarded and were airborne at 3:21; flew out of the weather and had a beautiful flight back to the Base. Back to the old grind!

#### **REGENSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 350 - FEBRUARY 5, 1945**

Forty-one aircraft took off to bomb the Rhenani and Danubia Storage Facilities at Regensburg. Thirty-one aircraft dropped their 250-lb. GP bombs on the primary target by PFF with unobserved results. One aircraft dropped its bombs on Marshalling Yards at Salzburg, Austria visually with hits observed in the Yards. One aircraft dropped its bombs on Marshalling Yards at Lienz, Austria, with hits severing the tracks in the Yards. A total of 758, 250-lb. GP and 6, 500-lb. GP bombs were dropped on the three targets. Two aircraft were early returns. Flak at the primary target was heavy, slight, and accurate. A/C #44-6678, 429th Squadron, is missing.

B-17 #530, piloted by 2nd Lt. J. E. Weber, was forced to make an emergency landing at Falcenaro Airdrome, Italy due to a fuel shortage. There were no injuries.

B-17 #42-102493, piloted by 2nd Lt. R. B. Edelen, was destroyed in a taxi accident. There were no injuries.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6678 - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Maurice D. Porter, 0-826284, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Donald M. Fishback, 0-927014, CP.	(POW)
F/O	John E. Skoba, T-129305, N.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	John P. Olinik, 36892273, TOG.	(INTERNEED)
S/Sgt.	Charles E. Smith, 34773171, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Christian L. Fredrickson, 39923520, L/T	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Arden O. Lannigan, 19199892, R/W.	(INTERNEED)
S/Sgt.	Glenn W. Machovec, 37682987, L/W.	(INTERNEED)
S/Sgt.	Franklin T. Whartman, 17142758, T/G.	(INTERNEED)
T/Sgt.	Kenneth L. Hoffman, 19123112, R/O.	(INTERNEED)

Statement of S/Sgt. Charles C. Turner, RO on B-17 #1108, after the mission: "I heard a radio message from aircraft #678 as follows: VZZF-losing altitude. Trying to make Switzerland - 40 gallons of gasoline left. Above is all I heard. No observations. This was at 1450 hours at 45-40N - 12-30E."

Statement of S/Sgt. Glenn W. Machovec, LW, after return to Allied control: "All members of the crew bailed out. F/O Skoba bail out, two men ahead of me. I saw him leave in good condition. We bailed at 17,000 feet and he could have lost consciousness from lack of oxygen and failed to pull cord. Our plane struck the ground in Switzerland. Four members of the crew were captured in Germany and five others, including myself, escaped to Switzerland, leaving F/O Skoba, the crew member missing."

The following translated story is from the Switzerland newspaper, *Engadiner Post*, 10 February 1945, and furnished by Fredy Peter, a Swiss historian. Report from Schuls: On 5 February 1945, also Schuls had been overflowed by foreign aircrafts. According to the noise, the aircrafts must have been fighting each other. One could hear the high pitch of fighters as well as loud sound of bombers. Nothing however could be seen due to the snow storm. After several detonations, the noise disappeared in the direction of Scarlital. One of the aircrafts then crashed in the steep slopes near Alps Plazer. No trace from crew.

As the local customs officers went to the crash site to see if they could help the crew, they were surprised by an avalanche and thrown down the slope. Border policeman G. Konnte was able to free himself and discovered, after much searching, the finger tips of his comrade in the snow. He was able to free him alive.



S/Sgt. John P. Olinik - (Courtesy - Olinik)

Sgt. John P. Olinik. February 14, 1996: "This is my condensed copy of my 28th mission to Regensburg, Germany, from my unpublished copyright book, *A GOING CONCERN*: At 7:30 a.m. February 5, 1945, our Flying Fortress, loaded with (10) 500-lb. bombs took off from Amendola Airfield in Foggia, Italy. Our bombing target today was to destroy the remaining oil refineries in Regensburg, Germany. It was a beautiful morning as we crossed the Adriatic Sea and approached the Swiss Alps. As we got nearer the target, and into Germany, we were greeted with heavy flak from all directions. Most of the Squadron got through unscathed and with little damage. Finally, over the target, I released my bombs, closed the bomb bay doors and started to head home. A heavy snow storm and blizzard with strong winds developed. Also, we got some more heavy flak and at this point, we got hit and lost (2) engines and started to lose fuel very rapidly. The pilot, Lt. Maurice Porter, radioed the lead commander and informed him of our situation. We then began to lose altitude as we left the formation and headed south, hopefully,

towards Switzerland. The heavy snow and winds still raged outside with visibility zero. We were now off course and probably lost. The crew started to throw out all loose baggage and ammo to lighten the ship. A few minutes later, the pilot put the plane on auto pilot and yelled, 'everyone out.' When I bailed out, my chute got jammed and did not open right away. I had a chest type on which had a small flap on top and I immediately started to struggle with it and finally a small chute opened and triggered a larger



chute to open. Several moments later, I landed in the snow in the mountains in the Alps. Gathering my parachute, I sat down and thanked the Lord for a safe landing.

"The snow was still coming down fiercely and visibility was about zero. About an hour later, I heard a gunshot and before long I found another crew member, Glenn Machovec, waist gunner. We spent the night huddled up in my parachute as the blizzard continued. The next morning the weather cleared a little and we decided to start walking. The snow finally stopped and the weather cleared. In the distance we saw a couple of figures making their way towards us and they were (2) more crew members, S/Sgt. Ken Hoffman and S/Sgt. Arden Lannigan.

"We started to walk again until we stumbled on an abandoned German cabin. On the front door, the nameplate read (STRUSSBURGER HUTTEE, GERMANY, 1907), which probably meant that we were still on the German side of the Alps. Inside the cabin were (4) beds, nicely made up, an assortment of pictures, maps, and several Swastika flags. Hitler's picture was on the wall. We spent a week or so here but with the rest of the rations gone, we started making plans to start our way out of there. Studying the maps, we decided to head South and East towards Switzerland.



A/C #44-6678 - Down in the Alps 2-5-45 (Courtesy - Olinik)

"A couple of days later, the weather cleared and we started our decent down the mountain. Each man was tied to each other at 20 foot intervals for safety reasons. We encountered endless ravines, slippery rocks and deep snow making walking very difficult. Towards evening we found another cabin. We had to break in where we found a pantry full of canned food and fruit. After resting a day or so, we stored up on food and proceeded our trip down again. After a couple of hours, we got lucky when we ran into a Swiss Ski Patrol. We now were in Swiss territory and were told we were interned. We proceeded walking to the small town of Chur where we were fed and put up for the night in a hotel.

"The next morning we were put on a train with a couple of guards and proceeded to Bern, then Zurich and finally Geneva, where we were interrogated, given new clothes and assigned quarters in an Army barracks. There were about 30 more crew members here who were shot down and interned for the rest of the war. Eventually, after a few weeks, we got repatriation orders and were flown to Marseille, France, and then to Naples, Italy. We made a short stop at our base in Foggia for a visit. Soon after, we boarded a troop ship and headed home. After an R&R in Miami, Florida, and a (30) day furlough, finally got reassigned to the National Aeronautical Committee for Aeronautics, as a design engineer, at Langley Field, Virginia. When the war ended in 1945 I got an honorable discharge in November 1945 and returned to civilian life. Four of our crew, Lt. Maurice Porter, pilot; Lt. Don Fishback, co-pilot; Sgt. Charles Smith, Eng.; S/Sgt. Christian Fredrickson, ball turret, all landed on the German side of the Alps and got captured and were POWs. F/O John Skoba, navigator, landed on the rocky side of the mountain and was killed. S/Sgt. Franklin Whartman, tail gunner, made his way to Switzerland alone."

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 351 - FEBRUARY 7, 1945**

Forty-two aircraft took off to bomb the Lobau Oil Refinery at Vienna. The First Wave dropped its 500-lb. RDX bombs by offset bombing. Results were unobserved due to an effective smoke screen. The Second Wave, one hour later, was able to bomb visually with its bombs in the target area. Flak was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate. A/C #44-6682 was hit by flak and the pilot radioed he was heading for the Russian lines. 2nd Lt. R. W. Harp, N, 429th Squadron, was lightly wounded by flak.

One aircraft dropped its bombs on a Railroad Bridge at 46-43N - 15-13E. One aircraft dropped its bombs on a Railroad Track at 47-00N - 16-00E. One aircraft dropped its bombs on a Railroad Bridge at 47-12N - 15-20E. Reports did not note results. One aircraft was an early return and another aborted.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6682 - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Dale E. Gold, 0-819997, P.	(POW)
1st Lt.	Wayne L. Rickert, 0-822080, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Andrew E. McGuire, 0-2071813, N.	(POW)
1st Lt.	Ellsworth L. Dougherty, 0-718083, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Louis D. Kaszak, 16138903, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Robert H. Gale, 18232323, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Andrew G. McCay, Jr., 13012702, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Albert H. Matula, 37475019, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Lawrence W. Burger, 37583388, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Duane J. Young, 16154396, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of T/Sgt. Robert H. Sherwood, UTG, after the mission: "We were on the bomb run, at an altitude of 29,000 feet. The time was 1419 hours, when I first noticed plane #682, which was flying number three position in the Second Squadron on our right. The plane received either a direct hit or near miss from flak on the under side of the left wing, which threw the plane into a steep right bank. The pilot of the plane immediately tried to correct this and the plane went into a steep bank to the left and in doing so, went into a skid and passed under our plane, just avoiding a collision. I watched the plane for the next two or three minutes and he continued on out in his skid, losing altitude rapidly and then into a cloud. That was the last I saw of plane #682."

Statement of 1st Lt. Dale E. Gold, P, after liberation: "We left the formation over the target and bailed out about 20 minutes later. All crew members bailed out at one minute intervals in the area of Papa, Hungary. All my men were captured and made prisoners of war. S/Sgt. Matula was killed. He was seen by the tail gunner just before he hit the ground. His chute billowed only a short distance from the ground and collapsed. His chute was either full of holes or there was a malfunction.

"I last saw all the crew at a prison camp near Moosdorf, south of Munich, on the seventh of May, 1945."

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 352 - FEBRUARY 8, 1945**

Twenty-seven aircraft took off and dropped 313, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Southwest Goods Section of Vienna. Bombing was by PFF and offset bombing with results unobserved. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Colonel Richard E. Waugh, Headquarters, was slightly wounded by flak. There were no losses.

#### **MOOSBIERBAUM, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 353 - FEBRUARY 9, 1945**

Three aircraft took off at 0843 hours and dropped 34, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Oil Refinery at Moosbierbaum by PFF with unobserved results. Landing was at 1450 hours.

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 354 - FEBRUARY 13, 1945**

Forty-two aircraft dropped 410, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the South Ordnance Depot in Vienna. Bombing was by PFF and offset bombing was used with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate, resulting in the death of S/Sgt. Paul W. Hampstein, 429th Squadron, and wounding of Cpl. W. Kopke, 20th Squadron.

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA/GRAZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 355 - FEBRUARY 14, 1945**

The assigned target was the Schwechat Oil Refinery in Vienna. The First Wave of 25 aircraft took off at 0830 hours and dropped 210, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. The Second Wave took off at 0930 hours and diverted to bomb the Marshalling Yards at Graz with 14 aircraft dropping 187, 500-lb. RDX bombs visually with hits reported in the Yards. One aircraft dropped its bombs on Railroad Tracks at 47-18N - 16-02E with unreported results. Flak at the targets was heavy, moderate to accurate, resulting in the wounding of 2nd Lt. D. E. Jones, N, 20th Squadron.

B-17 #44-6659, 429th Squadron, which was flying in the formation bombing Vienna, is missing. Two aircraft were early returns.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6659 - "HELLS ANGELS" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Robert E. Davis, 0-826889, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Frank S. Covey, 0-838667, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Edward P. Perry, 0-2065096, N.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Harold P. Marsh, 0-2069641, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Donald A. Bruegeman, 39468843, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Bobbie A. Davis, 34835407, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Emil P. Uhor, 15075526, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Richard (NMI) Hearing, 33611026, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Gerald P. Dickerson, 15125559, T/G.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Max A. Little, 19159865, R/O.	(POW)

1st Lt. Frank S. Covey, CP, after liberation: "We were 30 miles from Vienna when we left the formation. All crew members bailed out and nine members of the crew landed within a ten-mile radius of the village of Dubova, Czechoslovakia and were captured. The tenth member, S/Sgt. Hearing, was seen to leave the ship and his chute was seen to open but he was never seen subsequently."

2nd Lt. Edward P. Perry in his book, *RECALLING WORLD WAR II, A Personal Experience*, published by Vantage Press Inc., relates his experience of the mission to Vienna. January 18, 1993: "The target was the Schwechat Oil Refinery in Vienna. Since the target was predicted to be visual according to the weather briefing, we were to go over in Squadron trail, or only nine ships over the target at a time - just one long narrow parade of planes. Intelligence reported that Vienna was protected by 360 flak guns, so we knew it would not be a happy Valentine's Day. My navigation work was good and my ETA right on the button. We caught accurate flak at the Initial Point, with the entire bomb run flown through a cloud of steel. They had our number from the start. Smoke from the exploding shells filled the plane. A piece of flak tore off my helmet and another zipped along my left leg and through some flesh at the calf.

"The bombardier assigned to this mission, Marsh, was hit in the chest with a small piece of flak. Fortunately, he was wearing his flak vest as designed - as a vest. Because of a morbid fear of flak arriving from below and traveling up into my rear end, I had developed the bad habit of sitting on my flak vest. The force of the blow threw Marsh against me and I landed under the cockpit. We got the bombs off on the target OK and then the real trouble began. The number two engine had been knocked out completely and the prop started to windmill causing the ship to vibrate worse than an old Model T. Frantic efforts to control or feather the prop was unsuccessful. To finish things off, a fire started in the left wing. A fire near the gas tanks is a sure sign of approaching death, so the order to bail out was given by the pilot, Bob Davis. The plane was in a steep glide and seemed ready to start its spin. Then came the pleas through the intercom directed to me as the navigator: 'Where are we? Where the hell are we?' I know our location but the worst would happen. I could not reply! The wire from the microphone neck unit had been cut. It is difficult to describe the closeness that develops among members of a combat crew. Not being able to come through for them at that moment, when needed so, will always be one of my life's serious regrets.

"The formation was now almost out of sight. The cover flew away as I pulled the escape hatch lever. Looking down, I could see the fields and woods far below. What a terrible, low, depressed feeling - all alone in the middle of an enemy country. It must be a nightmare; but no it isn't. This is really happening! We were about 22,000 feet as I tumbled out of the hatch. If possible I wanted to free-fall to about 10,000 feet before pulling the ripcord. There is no sensation quite like falling through the air. The only noise is that of the wind whistling past. The only pain is that in your ears as the air pressure builds. These sharp pains are relieved by almost constant 'popping.' I felt myself losing consciousness at about 12,000 feet, so I had to pull the ripcord. The jerk of the chute was sickening but the sight of the big white umbrella overhead was a welcome sight. I had hardly enough time to get settled before bullets started whistling past, first the hissing noise, then the sharp crack. Guess it's true you may not hear the one that gets you. Maybe I should have delayed opening my chute a little longer, but then I didn't think anything like this could happen. The bitter realities of war even included shooting helpless, tied up victims like myself. I acted as though I had been hit by hanging limply as my head rolled around. Apparently it was a bad performance. The bullets continued to whistle by.

"The fact of facing almost certain death finally sank in. I said a prayer that Mom and Dad would soon recover from their grief. I also prayed that if He willed, I might have a safe deliverance. After that, followed a strange period of absolute mental calm with no fear or anxiety. It was a feeling beyond



description - one of absolute peace - a power 'which passeth all understanding.' Looking back, I know I had a chosen encounter with a very loving and personal God.

"The ground started coming at me pretty fast and I had trouble getting my back to the wind. Once, while trying to turn around, I almost spilled my chute. That stopped my messing around. The trip down, which seemed like an eternity, finally ended when I cracked into the top of a tall pine tree.

"Hanging there in the harness, swaying back and forth, I looked down. Two deer scurried away through the snow. This can't be happening, but why don't I wake up? It was always the other guy that didn't get back. This just can't be for real.

"I managed to swing to the trunk of the tree, unbuckled the parachute from the harness, and climbed down. The parachute hanging over most of the tree top was a dead giveaway and would soon attract company. I started to run through the forest with no particular object in mind. Because of the snow and the heavy flying suit I was wearing, it didn't take long to become exhausted. Walking along a small ridge, I noticed six men in the valley below. I knew I was very close to the Austrian border, or perhaps had even crossed over into Czechoslovakia. We had been briefed that some pro-Allied activity was taking place in that area. These men were wearing brown uniforms, not like the German uniform that I knew of. Maybe I had come across a small group of friendly guerrillas. Deciding my only chance was to make contact, I walked down to them with my hands held high. They started calling out, 'Comrade, comrade,' and proceeded to shake my hands with friendly pats on the back. Overjoyed, I passed around cigarettes and tried to understand what they were telling me. One of the Slovaks guided me to a small tunnel, and by drawing a circle on the ground, gave me to understand he would be back at 7 p.m. to take me out. The tunnel, about three feet high, led to a small chamber. I had just finished cleaning my pistol and was looking over my escape maps we were given when outside I heard a whistle and saw a couple of blue uniforms. Apparently my buddies had betrayed me. My first thought was of the blue SS troop uniforms and what would lie ahead in that case. They started shouting something about shooting and pointed their rifles at the cave. From where I lay, the automatic rifles looked like cannons. Immediately, all desire of fighting left me (not that I had much desire to begin with).

"For the life of me I couldn't recall the German word for 'surrender,' so I started shouting, 'Comrade, comrade,' and proceeded to crawl out with a white handkerchief in my hand and heart in my mouth. Outside it seemed as though the whole German army was waiting for me.

"A sergeant searched me while the others trained their guns on me, an unnecessary precaution indeed. After the search, I ended up with nothing but a pencil, and surprisingly the gold signet ring with a diamond, given me as a junior high school graduation present. Apparently it just wasn't noticed. I was marched for about three miles to a small village where just about the entire population came out to see this curiosity. Unlike many (maybe most) of the German civilians, these people were not hostile, merely inquisitive. One woman, who I took to be an imported Russian slave worker, looked me over, shook her head, and said what sounded like, 'Oh he is so young.' After a short wait for transportation, I was taken to a larger town, Mostar. Here I was marched with soldiers to a large building containing their living quarters. While sitting on the bench with the soldiers, a German officer entered. The men, of course, snapped to attention and stayed that way while the officer really gave them hell. Later, one of the soldiers confirmed what I had realized from my high school German. They disobeyed orders not to take prisoners, and I was not supposed to be alive. That's why I can't hate all Germans - just some. The raw realities of war continued to sink in.

"It was then about 5 p.m., and I sat in the barracks until about 8 p.m. Marsh, the bombardier, had also been brought in. I had a terrific headache, and every muscle in my body ached also. By feeling around, I discovered I had been scratched up a bit upon landing, but nothing serious. Fortunately my leg had stopped bleeding, and although my body ached inside and out, no bones seemed to be broken.

"It was about 8 o'clock when Marsh and I were loaded into a small sort of bus and taken to a private home. The several men sitting in the room wore plain civilian clothes - and I was not happy - thinking for sure the Gestapo had us. To add to the concern, several horsewhips and pieces of rubber hose were hanging on the wall. We were offered some sausage and dark bread, but foolishly we refused to eat. I do not understand why, because we were certainly very hungry and there were no laws against eating - just talking. Maybe we were afraid of being poisoned. Marsh was then escorted from the room. Two of the men, who spoke English quite well, then started to question me, and this interrogation continued until after midnight. No torture or rough stuff was used. When Marsh returned he also said he made out OK and also had not been roughed up. Happily our Gestapo fears appeared to be unfounded. Apparently the rubber hoses and whips were displayed for psychological effect - at least in our case.

"Thinking back, these men were probably members of the town council or whatever is local power. Of course this would mean they were Gestapo, or at least under Nazi control. Maybe it's best not trying to figure it out - just accept the mild interrogation as just another blessing.

"So far all my actions had been 'by the book:' no conversations with German soldiers, no friendly gestures, etc. Also no answers to questions other than the permitted name, rank, and serial number. This goes with the job of course. But it may have served a very practical purpose. Perhaps it is logical to assume that if any useful information were furnished, I would be of no further use (alive that is).

"Shortly after midnight we were marched to what must have been the town jail, and the rest of the night we spent on some boards that served as a cot. No blankets were offered. And it was cold! However feeling miserable and in a state of exhaustion, I slept like a rock until awakened at dawn."

Lt. Perry eventually was confined in a permanent camp at Langwasser, near Nurnberg, and the rest of the crew, except S/Sgt. Uhor, was confined there also. The camp was evacuated April 4th, 1945 and forced marched, in the bitter cold, away from the advancing Russian army. Lt. Perry developed double lobar pneumonia while on the march and finally was hospitalized at a POW camp near Moosdorf. The camp was liberated April 29th by American forces. He was transferred to hospitals in Regensburg, Germany, Rheims, France, and Verdun, France, released June 8th and transferred to LaHavre for return to the U.S.

T/Sgt. Gerald Voss, Jr. was the Radio Operator on the crew of Lt. Eliot B. Spiess. They were assigned to the 96th Squadron, August 26, 1944. November 26, 1994: "I was fortunate to survive my fifty missions, (35 sorties) due to the severity of them. My first mission was to bomb railroad bridges at Budapest, Hungary, September 5, 1944.

"I had missions to Salzburg (1), Linz (2), one of which was a night mission, and Vienna (9). Those missions to Vienna were extremely tough due to all the flak batteries that were surrounding the city and oil refineries.

"I had three missions to Brux and one to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. Brux was very rough. I went to Blechhammer (3), Regensburg (2), and Lechfield (1). Of course, everyone knew that trips into Germany spelled nothing but trouble.

"I went to an airfield in Athens, Greece one time and once each to Budapest and Debreczen, Hungary. Debreczen is where "Sweet Pea" took a terrible hit, but came home. I had three trips into Northern Italy: Bologna, Treviso, and Verona; one to Ordea Marshalling Yards, Romania, and three to Yugoslavia, Brod, Maribor, and Sabotica.

"My last mission was on February 14, 1945 to the Schwechat Oil Refineries in Vienna, Austria. What a target to finish my missions! The 429th lost a ship that day."

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 356 - FEBRUARY 15, 1945**

Eighteen aircraft took off and 15 aircraft dropped their 500-lb. RDX bombs on the South Station Freight Yards in Vienna. Bombing was by PFF with unobserved results. One aircraft bombed Wiener Neustadt, Austria by PFF. One aircraft bombed Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt visually, with hits reported. One aircraft bombed Treibach, Austria Marshalling Yards visually, with hits reported. A total of 202, 500-lb. RDX bombs were dropped on the four targets. Flak at the primary target was heavy, moderate, and inaccurate. No losses.

#### **VIPITENO, ITALY/BOLZANO, ITALY/HALL, AUSTRIA/LANDSBURG, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 357 - FEBRUARY 16, 1945**

The assigned target was the Lechfield Airdrome, Germany but weather forced both waves to selected alternates. The First Wave of 20 aircraft took off at 0630 hours and seven aircraft bombed Marshalling Yards at Vipiteno, Italy. Seven aircraft bombed an Airdrome at Landsburg, Germany. Six aircraft bombed a Railroad two and one-half miles south of Bolzano, Italy.

Nineteen aircraft took off in the Second Wave at 0636 hours. Five aircraft bombed Marshalling Yards at Hall, Austria. Two aircraft bombed Marshalling Yards at Vipiteno, Italy. Eight aircraft bombed a Railroad Line two and one-half miles south of Bolzano, Italy. One aircraft was an early return and three aborted. A total of 528, 100-lb. bombs were dropped on all the targets.

Flak was heavy, intense and accurate at some targets seriously wounding S/Sgt. E. W. Finch and light wounds to 1st Lt. James R. Mitchell, 1st Lt. D. N. Drice, 2nd Lt. O. T. Merwin, 2nd Lt. H. L. Hodges, 2nd Lt. W. J. Morrow, 2nd Lt. W. J. Gotter, T/Sgt. A. L. Walker, S/Sgt. H. W. Strutt, and Cpl. C. L. Refford. Good bombing results were reported at all targets by both waves.

#### **LINZ, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 358 - FEBRUARY 17, 1945**

Twenty-nine aircraft took off and 28 aircraft dropped 336, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Main Station Marshalling Yards at Linz by PFF with unobserved results. Flak was heavy, moderate, and accurate with no injuries and no losses. One aircraft was an early return.

#### **LINZ/SALZBURG, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 359 - FEBRUARY 18, 1945**

The intended target was the Linz Benzol Plant but 14 aircraft diverted to bomb the Industrial Center at Linz, dropping 166, 500-lb. RDX bombs by PFF with unobserved results. Thirteen aircraft diverted to bomb Marshalling Yards at Salzburg, Austria, dropping 156, 500-lb. RDX bombs with unobserved results. Two aircraft were early returns. There were no injuries and no losses.

#### **KLAGENFURT, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 360 - FEBRUARY 19, 1945**

The primary target was Vienna but due to high winds, the Group diverted to the Marshalling Yards at Klagenfurt. Several runs were made at the target before 26 aircraft dropped 292, 500-lb. RDX bombs visually on the target. A good bomb pattern in the Yards was reported. There was little flak, no injuries and no losses.

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 361 - FEBRUARY 20, 1945**

Twenty-nine aircraft took off with 26 dropping 264, 500-lb. RDX bombs on the Lobau Oil Refinery in Vienna. Bombing was by visual and offset methods with a good concentration of bombs in the target area. Flak was heavy, moderate, and accurate. 1st Lt. William T. Hix, 429th Squadron, was the lead bombardier and though mortally wounded by flak, remained at his post and completed releasing the bombs. S/Sgt. R. D. Bradley, 96th Squadron, was lightly wounded. Six aircraft dropped 68, 500-lb.

RDX bombs on the Steel Works at Kapfenberg, Austria visually with some hits reported in the target area.

#### **VIENNA, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 362 - FEBRUARY 21, 1945**

Twenty-eight aircraft took off with 26 aircraft dropping 301, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Central Yards and Shops in the Vienna Marshalling Yards. Bombing was visual and a good concentration of hits were recorded. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate resulting in injuries to S/Sgt. T. R. Lively, B, 20th Squadron, and S/Sgt. James. H. Pewitt, LWG, 96th Squadron. Flak also accounted for loss of two B-17s of the 429th Squadron.

One aircraft dropped 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Feiskritz, Austria and another aircraft dropped 12, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at 46-24N - 15-50E. Results were not recorded.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6198 - "DOLLAR 98" - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Robert P. Trowbridge, 0-827083, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	William D. Struby, 0-829099, CP.	(POW)
2nd Lt.	Allen W. Swain, 0-2064355, N.	(DED)
S/Sgt.	Arthur B. Hauft, 12083561, TOG.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Dozier W. Linder, 34775580, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Donald F. Moon, 37634486, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Edward L. Fry, 33763314, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Leigh W. Fuller, 42030388, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Richard N. Schrode, 17164752, T/G.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Ira L. Cox, 38494426, R/O.	(POW)

B-17 #198 was observed to have one engine feathered at the target area, after bombs away. The aircraft was losing altitude and seen in a turn going toward Russian lines. This is the last known information about this aircraft.

#### **MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #44-6689 - 429TH SQUADRON**

1st Lt.	Eugene F. Bull, 0-672321, P.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Harold E. Frazer, 0-825141, CP.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	John R. Specker, 0-2072373, N.	(RET)
2nd Lt.	Robert C. Krejsa, 0-776933, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Lewis E. Fifield, 11014690, U/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	William E. Martin, Jr., 38517837, L/T.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	Clyde T. Freestone, 39923682, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt.	John Gillecee, 12041244, L/W.	(POW)
T/Sgt.	Ted J. Bunnell, 6920232, T/G.	(DED)
T/Sgt.	Jesse A. Killian, 13120001, R/O.	(POW)

T/Sgt. Bunnell died of wounds in a German hospital

Statement of 1st Lt. John D. Sisson, B, on B-17 #581, after the mission: "Coming off the target after we had gotten clear of the flak, plane #689 appeared under us heading for the Russian lines. A big hole behind his No. 4 engine was burning. This was at approximately 1305 hours at an altitude of 23,000 over Neustadter Lake. At about 1306 hours, one parachute appeared. The plane was under control but was losing altitude rapidly with pieces of wing breaking off.



"When I last saw plane #689, he was south of Gyor and I believe he was heading for Papa. I would judge he was about 20 to 30 miles from the Russian lines."

Statement of T/Sgt. Jesse E. Killian, RO, after liberation: "We were in the No. 3 lead box when we were hit over the target and left the formation. The time was 1259 and we were at an altitude of 23,000 feet.

"All of our crew bailed out of the plane over Hungary at approximately one and one-half hours after target time. We headed for Russian lines but were unable to make them. Our aircraft struck the ground about 30 miles south of Gyor.

"The last seen of the pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, and navigator was just before we bailed out of the plane. I saw, and was with, the rest of the crew after we were taken prisoner. The two waist gunners were injured, and the tail gunner was injured seriously. The ball gunner and top gunner were not injured at all.

"The tail gunner was wounded while in the plane and then shot through the feet coming down or either just after landing. He was refused medical treatment for approximately three days. The last time I saw him he was at a German airfield at Papa, Hungary, at which time he was taken to a German hospital located in Hungary. The right waist gunner, S/Sgt. Clyde Freestone, and the left waist gunner, S/Sgt. John Gillecee, were also taken to the same hospital. The other crew members, consisting of top turret gunner, T/Sgt. Lewis Fifield; ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. William E. Martin; and myself were left at the field for a period of 14 days and then after being joined by S/Sgt. Freestone, were taken to Germany. S/Sgt. Gillecee joined us in the prison camp around the first of April, 1945, and then told us that T/Sgt. Bunnell had died in the hospital. However, this information had been gained from the Germans and we had no way to prove it."

1st Lt. Eugene F. Bull was the pilot at the date of assignment to the 429th Squadron, and other crew members were: 2nd Lt. James B. Brown, CP; 1st Lt. Bernard W. Stark, N; 2nd Lt. Robert C. Krejsa, B; T/Sgt. Lewis E. Fifield, Engineer; Cpl. Jesse A. Killian, RO; and gunners, S/Sgt. Ted J. Bunnell, Cpl. Clyde T. Freestone, and Cpl. William E. Martin, Jr. September 7, 1992: "On the 2-21-45 mission, my co-pilot was 2nd Lt. Harold E. Frazer; navigator was 2nd Lt. John R. Specker, Jr.; and my left waist gunner was S/Sgt. John Gillecee. The rest were my regular crew.

"I kept a diary of sorts until my paper ran out so I do know what happened on 2-21-45. We bombed Vienna at 1300 hours. Right after bomb release, I received two direct hits by 88s, one in the tail cutting rudder controls and losing most of the vertical stabilizer and the left elevator. The tail gunner came out OK. One took most of the wing between Nos. 3 and 4 and I lost both engines and right aileron. The blast knocked out the right window. By way of explanation, I was flying on the right hand side, Wing man for the Group leader. The co-pilot was a first pilot on his sixth mission to check out before returning to his own crew. It was customary for new pilots to fly for a few combat missions, as co-pilot, with an experienced crew. I had one and a half years as an instructor and think I was one of the hightime pilots in the Group. Since I could fly from either side, I asked Frazer if he wanted to fly left side since he was a first pilot and he agreed to fly there. When we got hit, I was in the right and my regular navigator was in the lead ship and saw me get hit by flak and reported me gone when he got back. I was hit in the right shoulder but not bad, however, I was blown over and forward by the blast. The hit turned the ship almost over and was on fire which blew itself out, together with the Co2.

"I was losing altitude about 800 feet per minute and trying to get the ship under control. We had bombed at 25,000 feet and I got righted out at 9,500. The choice was where to go next with only partial controls and losing altitude. The Russians were closest and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to clear the Alps, if I got that far.

"At briefing we were told the location of the Russian lines and so I turned toward Russian territory and was losing altitude at 500-800 feet per minute. After we left the target area, I told my engineer, Sgt. Fifield, to get rid of everything; guns, ball turret, and all other extra weight. We flew east until we could see Lake Balaton where we were jumped by four Me-109s. I told the crew to bail out and after I saw the chutes open, I told the officers to bail out; navigator, bombardier, and then the co-pilot. They went out the nose hatch. When the co-pilot went out I saw he had his leg straps hanging loose. The next time I saw him, he said he started to slip out of his harness and he threw his shoes, which were tied together by the laces, and caught them on his foot.

"The fighters were attacking the ship and at least one of them went after the men in the chutes. Lt. Specker was wounded and Lt. Krejsa had a big hole blown in his chute. I put the plane in a dive and then pulled up and turned into the 109s but had no luck in trying to ram them. I was hit several times by 20mm cannon fire and machine gun fire. Two hits were in the cockpit area, blowing off the top turret. The second one came in the cockpit on the pilots side (I was standing between the seats) and took the wheel right out of my hand, blew out the left window and windshield. I wasn't touched but at this point I figured I had pushed my luck as far as prudent, and bailed out the escape hatch. I delayed my jump as I could see the fighters going after other chutes, and delayed my opening until I was about 300 feet from the ground and, as a result, I fractured my back. Although I couldn't move my legs, I saw a German soldier head toward me so I shot at him and he dropped and I didn't see him again. Feeling came back to my legs so I started toward the Russian line and they started shooting, but missed. They picked me up and took me to a Field HQ where they worked me over thinking I was German because I was blond, fair and tall. They took my watch and gun but then found a pack of Old Gold cigarettes in my leg pocket and then decided I was American, which I had been telling them all along. After a time, and giving me back my belongings, they brought in Lt. Frazer. We were then taken to the Headquarters of a Russian General. There I met Lt. Krejsa and we were taken in a truck at night, no lights and very fast, to a local area HQ where we met a Colonel. There we met Lt. Specker who had been wounded in the right thigh by a Me-109. The Russians said they had seen one man near a German tank but had received no word from him. I later found out it was my engineer, when I saw him after the war.

"We stayed there that night, and the next day we were taken to another town where we were fed and stayed that night. The following day we were taken to a town called Dunavcse where we met three members of a B-24 crew. We were told we would be taken to an Allied mission but it would be several days. We were billeted with an old lady and her son. I don't know how old she was but her son was 67. It was just one room with attached shed, where we stayed, and we were pretty cramped for room. Then began the boredom! Each day an interpreter would tell us we would go to an Allied mission, maybe tomorrow or next week.

"On March 6th, we were joined by a Canadian, Lt. Joseph Gordon. He was left behind at Dieppe and was a prisoner of the Germans and Hungarians after walking across Germany. He could also speak Russian so was a great help to me in negotiating with the Russians. On March 9th, they gave me two more men who had bailed out March 3rd from a B-24, Lt. Robert French and Lt. Robert Parkhurst. That made ten of us. March 10th, the Germans counter-attacked in the Lake Balaton area and were making headway. We were still getting the same story, maybe TOMORROW or next week.

"On March 11th, a Russian came in and told us to get ready to leave. They gave us a Russian Sgt. and a private to go with us. We got rations (bread and moldy sausage) and took off in an open truck. There were now 12 of us, nine airmen, one Canadian, and two civilians, one of which was a British Lt. in civilian clothes. We got to Kecskemet, Hungary, where we lost the truck and we were held there until the 16th. I think it was, since I ran out of paper on the 11th.

"I am a little hazy about the date we left, but it was several days later. We walked to the main street and the Sgt. commandeered a truck at gun point (Thompson sub), over the objections of the

driver, but the machine gun won out. From there we rode and walked to Debreczen, Hungary where there was supposed to be an Allied mission. It took us a couple of days and many mis-directions, but we finally found it. After walking about 15 kilometers, we finally came to what had been a hospital-asylum. There were two Hungarians at the gate who didn't seem to know where they were or what was going on so I decided to look further. As we were leaving, I heard an American voice yelling, 'where the God-damned hell have you guys been, we knew you were out there someplace.'

"They asked me to vouch for the people I brought in with me, but I could only vouch for my own officers, and the rest was up to them. An hour or so later, an officer came in and said they were all they said they were, including the civilian who said he was OSS. After that we had the first decent meal since 2-21-45 and it tasted real good. I had dropped from 175 to 128 pounds. A couple of days later we were loaded in a C-47, flown by General Ira Faker, who had been on an inspection mission, and we were flown to Bari, Italy.

"I took Lt. Specker to a hospital to get him checked out and he was fine, completely healed. He had mentioned to the doctor that I had hurt my back so they had to see me. The result was that I had to spend a couple of weeks in the hospital although my back was almost healed. They let me sleep on boards. I returned to the 429th Squadron on my 25th birthday, April 16th.

"There are many things I have left out, many incidents when we were with the Russians. They were not too friendly, seeming to resent our presence. I was going to dinner with a Russian officer one time when he came upon one of their guards who was asleep at his post, so the officer woke him. There was an exchange of words, in Russian, and he shot the guard dead, with no reaction. We were held in a house, as I wrote, and we could go out but all the perimeter was under guard to confine us to a small area. After a few days of Russian food we were pretty hungry so I decided to do something about it. Late one night, when things were quiet, I sneaked out and broke into a warehouse where they had food, etc. stored and I stole as much as I could carry. When I got it back to the house it was cans of pork, and on the bottom it said, 'packed in St. Louis.'

"I became a dropping point for any soldier they picked up, which I gladly accepted the responsibility for, and was the ranking officer. I would give only rank, serial, and name when we were interrogated, and I made sure that was all they got from me. After all, they were supposed to be our Allies but they just didn't act like it much.

"My enlisted men were all liberated and got back home before I got back to Allied control. They didn't know about me, nor I about them. Not a day passed that I did not wonder how they made out or where they were."

T/Sgt. Jesse A. Killian, RO. September 25, 1992: "We had just dropped our bombs and I was looking in the bomb bay to see that all bombs were clear when we were hit with what I always felt was a three-gun burst. Pieces came through the radio room, just above my head, and it was always my understanding that we lost both No. 3 and No. 4 engines and, therefore, headed for the Russian lines because we could not get back over the Alps. We flew for some time by having good pilots and because we threw out everything that was not nailed down. We were trying to get the ball turret out when we began to get flak, around Gyor, Hungary, and a little later the flak stopped and the German fighters came in on us. We jumped against the metal under the waist guns and I pulled my flak suit up over me for protection because the fighters kept attacking us and we did not have anything to fight with as we had thrown all the ammunition out. That was when Fifield came back and said, 'Bull says to get the hell out of here!'

"We began to leave the ship from the rear door and I do not know when or how Fifield left the ship, but I was the last to go out the rear door. I did not open my chute immediately because we had been told to wait awhile, and I could also hear the fighter planes and I was afraid of them. I floated long



enough, after bailing out, that I saw the plane hit the ground, crash, and then burn. After I pulled my chute I came down, and as I got close to the ground I could hear bullets and see people shooting at me, but they did not hit me.

"I came down on top of a Hungarian command post and was captured at once. They took my watch, rings, shoes (which were on my harness) and my map pouch with money and other stuff. They also took my .45 but I had emptied the clip when I saw I was going to be taken. I was taken to a farmhouse and it was noted that I was wounded on the left side of my back, and a doctor who spoke English put some kind of medicine and gauze on the wounds. He advised me that the Hungarian Colonel was going to ask me some questions, and if I knew what was good for me, I would answer them. I told him I would give only name, rank, and serial number. They turned me over to some soldiers who took me into another room, placed the bare soles of my feet over the bed rail and beat them. The pain was unbearable, and I either passed out or pretended to do so, as the next thing I knew they were trying to make up to me and offered me some cigarettes, and brought me some water.

"I was later turned over to the Germans, about 9 p.m. that night, and after being talked to by a German Colonel and interpreter, and because of my name, they wanted to know if I spoke German and I told them I did not. After telling them I could give only my name, rank and serial number, I was told that I would be placed with German NCOs of my rank, or better, and that a Comrade was there but I could not talk to him. When they took me to the NCOs, T/Sgt. Fifield was there and when we tried to talk to each other, they moved me into another room and gave me cheese, bread to eat, and water to drink.

"Later that night we were put on a truck with the rest of the crew and carried to a German airfield at Papa, Hungary. T/Sgt. Bunnell was in bad shape and we tried to get something done for him. After about three days, the Germans carried Bunnell, Freestone, and Gillece to a German hospital and me to the dispensary on the airfield where they gave me a shot, put some medicine on my wounds and bound me up.

"After 14 days we were carried back into Germany, along with other Americans who had been brought in; approximately 15 or 16 of us. We traveled by rail and by foot when rails were bombed out, and ended up at Wetzler, Germany for interrogation, then to Nurnburg for Stalag 13-A and then back on the road, ending up at Muhlberg at the end. After 47 years, these memories are fresh in my mind.

"Prison camp was not so bad, except for anyone who had not been restricted, it was very confining. Mostly it was the absence of food, and the fact you could not take a bath was very frustrating. As most of us at Nurnburg were fliers and in rank of Staff Sergeant or better, we could not be made to work and we took advantage of this. At Wetzler we were fed twice a day and evidently the Germans had access to Red Cross parcels because we were fed twice a day with oatmeal and powdered milk. Later at Nurnburg, and on the road, we received practically nothing, usually a soup made of some kind of beans, and when they had worms in it, we ate that too (anyway they were cooked).

"When we left Nurnburg, on the road, we were attacked by US fighters when one came down, strafed and dropped a bomb, but a second one started strafing then pulled up and did not drop his bombs. Evidently they found out what it was. After this we were checked out every day by a fighter plane and when on the morning of liberation, the P-51 pilot gave us a show over the prison camp. We can remember the times we had to leave our building, or tents, for bombing raids by the British or our own forces, especially in Nurnburg.

"I can remember when we stole all of one farmer's potatoes and also when we got into a beet bed thinking it was a turnip bed. This is the way we stayed alive. I lost 30 pounds and Fifield, who was much larger, must have lost 70 pounds or more. We could cook our own meals, with a partner, using Klim cans, which were powdered milk in Red Cross packages. These packages were supposed to last one week, per man, but we never received anything like that, only once in awhile."



#### **IMMENSTADT, GERMANY/REUTTE, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 363 - FEBRUARY 22, 1945**

Thirty-five aircraft took off to bomb Marshalling Yards in the Munich area. Due to extremely poor weather, only five aircraft were able to bomb Marshalling Yards at Immenstadt, dropping 60, 500-lb. RDX bombs, and four aircraft dropped 48, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Reutte. Heavy clouds obscured the targets and results of the attacks were not known. Twenty-six aircraft aborted after over eight hours in the air. Flak was heavy, slight, and accurate with no losses or injuries.

#### **WORGL, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 364 - FEBRUARY 23, 1945**

With many of the main Marshalling Yards in disrepair, the Germans were forced to use yards in smaller towns. The 15th Air Force was now concentrating knocking out yards being used for movement of troops and supplies. Twenty-nine aircraft took off to bomb Marshalling Yards at Amstettin, Austria, but were diverted by weather to bomb Marshalling Yards at Worgl. Twenty-seven aircraft dropped 316, 500-lb. RDX bombs. This target was partially obscured by smoke from a previous bombing. One Squadron had a good concentration at the choke point, one Squadron was over, and two Squadrons dropped into the smoke. No flak, no losses.

#### **FERRARA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 365 - FEBRUARY 24, 1945**

Weather prevented the bombing of a primary target, so 19 aircraft dropped 222, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Ferrara. Two Squadrons had hits in the Yards and one Squadron over. One Squadron of seven aircraft dropped 84, 500-lb. RDX bombs on a Railroad Bridge with no hits on the bridge but a good pattern around it. No injuries, no losses.

Sgt. Elmer J. Alberternt, 429th Squadron, died of injuries incurred between two military vehicles between Manfredonia and Foggia.

#### **LINZ, AUSTRIA/AMSTETTIN, AUSTRIA - MISSION NO. 366 - FEBRUARY 25, 1945**

Twenty-nine aircraft took off to bomb the Marshalling Yards at Linz. Smoke at the target from other bombing obscured the target and only seven aircraft dropped 80, 500-lb. RDX bombs into the smoke. Fourteen aircraft diverted to Amstettin and dropped 168, 500-lb. RDX bombs into the Marshalling Yards. A very good concentration of hits was recorded in the Yards and Round House areas. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Seriously wounded was T/Sgt. Nicholas Michaelysnin, RO, 96th Squadron. Lightly wounded were 2nd Lt. R. F. Kennelly, P, 49th Squadron; 2nd Lt. F. J. Plata, CP, 49th Squadron; and Cpl. D. A. Barta, RO, 49th Squadron. Eight aircraft aborted.

#### **AUGSBURG, GERMANY - MISSION NO. 367 - FEBRUARY 27, 1945**

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 167, 500-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Augsburg. Bombing was visual and good hits were reported with one large explosion and one minor explosion reported. Flak was heavy, intense, and accurate wounding 1st Lt. L. C. Allen, N, 429th Squadron.

#### **VERONA/PERONA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 368 - FEBRUARY 28, 1945**

Colonel John D. Ryan had rejoined the Group, from 5th Wing Headquarters, temporarily, and was leading the Group to bomb the Verona/Perona Railroad Bridge which was considered a choke point for all rail traffic through the Brenner Pass. Twenty-one aircraft dropped 121, 1,000-lb. RDX bombs with poor results reported. Colonel Ryan's aircraft was severely damaged by heavy, accurate, and intense flak.

Fourteen aircraft bombed an alternate target, the Breecia Goods Yards, Italy. One Box of seven dropped 21 tons of 1,000-lb. RDX bombs with poor results reported. The second Box dropped 21 tons of 1,000-lb. RDX bombs with excellent results reported.

Seven aircraft dropped 21 tons of 1,000-lb. RDX bombs on Marshalling Yards at Conegliano, Italy with excellent results reported.

B-17 #582, piloted by Colonel Ryan, was hit before and after bombs away and forced to make an emergency landing at Falcenaro Airdrome, Italy. The following members of the crew are listed as casualties: Pilot, Colonel John D. Ryan, wounded hand (amputated finger); CP, 2nd Lt. Francis L. Michaelis, seriously wounded; N, 1st Lt. Robert L. Hall (KIA); B, 1st Lt. William Bachardy, slightly wounded; UTG, T/Sgt. Donald R. Simon (KIA); ROG, T/Sgt. Richard K. Forst, seriously wounded. Other crew members were: BT, S/Sgt. Ernest Short; WG, S/Sgt. Franklin E. Keller, Jr.; and TG, 1st Lt. Benjamin W. Doddridge, Observer (pilot).

Wounded members were hospitalized and remaining members were returned to Base.

1st Lt. Luther S. Reams, Navigator on another aircraft, was seriously wounded.

Henry L. Berryhill, Jr. was a member of the 49th Squadron and in a letter dated May 23, 1994 to Rudolph Koller, gave more information regarding Lt. Reams. "1st Lt. Reams, Navigator, 49th Squadron, lost a leg over Verona, February 28, 1945. He was awarded the Silver Star for this mission because he continued to call headings to the flight deck after his leg had been severed by flak eight inches below the crotch. The Bombardier received the Distinguished Flying Cross for saving Reams' life by effectively applying the tourniquet that kept him from bleeding to death."

2nd Lt. Francis L. Michaelis was a member of the 96th Squadron and the regular co-pilot on the crew of Captain Charles Childs. October 10, 1994: "I did not know the navigator or bombardier on the mission of the 28th of February. They were officers that evidently flew with Colonel Ryan on missions that he flew lead. Nor did I know who was flying in the tail, but believe it was an officer and perhaps a pilot. I have no knowledge whether he helped Colonel Ryan after I was wounded and left the co-pilot's seat. Other members said he was an officer in the tail for observation but did not know him or his rank.

"I was moved from my seat to below the flight deck. Frank Keller gave me a shot of morphine and applied tourniquets to my arm and leg. At periodic times I nudged his feet to come down and release them to let the blood flow to my extremities.

"If I remember correctly, we bombed at an altitude of 27,000 feet. We bombed from the north where the mountains were almost that high. I told Colonel Ryan before we entered the plane that we would 'get the hell shot out of us from that low altitude.' He responded that, 'It won't be that bad.' Most of our bombings were from 29,000 to 31,000 feet.

"We landed not too long after that and were taken to an emergency hospital where our wounds were temporarily taken care of. We were then taken from there, either the next day, or the day after, in litters, so it must have been a hospital plane. The hospital was in Bari, Italy.

"There has been controversy as to how many fingers that Colonel Ryan lost. My recollection was that it was one and that they attempted to reattach it without success. The Colonel was in another area from me but he did visit me. He was a fine gentleman and I did receive a letter from him one time when he was near my home, but unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to visit with him.

"I was in the hospital, in Bari, for several weeks and then returned to the States on a hospital ship. I never returned to the Group. I was in hospitals and rehabilitation centers until late 1946 when I received my discharge from the Air Force."

S/Sgt. Ernest H. Short, Ball Turret Gunner on the crew of Captain Charles Childs. December 5, 1994: "It is hard to remember what happened over 50 years ago on a specific mission. I have tried to erase some of the details over the past years.

"On February 28, 1945, Mission No. 368, we were briefed to bomb a railroad bridge and highway bridges at Verona, Italy. We were briefed that the Germans were moving equipment north out of Italy toward the Brenner Pass. 'Knock out the bridge.'

"A brief truck ride from our camp to the airfield where the ground crews had our plane ready, loaded with bombs and gas. A brief introduction of the pilot, Colonel John Ryan to the other officers and crew members which were as follows: 2nd Lt. Francis L. Michaelis, CP; 1st Lt. R. L. Hall, N; 1st Lt. W. Bachardy, B; T/Sgt. Donald R. Simon, U/T; T/Sgt. Richard K. Forst, R/O; S/Sgt. Ernest H. Short, B/T, Panther Operator; S/Sgt. Franklin E. Keller, WG; Pilot-unknown, TG. I did not know the navigator, bombardier and possibly a pilot. The Colonel did not have a regular crew so would select members from the Squadrons to fly with him. We had flown with him several times.

"Take off was at about 7:30 a.m. After several hours of flying and gaining altitude, the formation was formed and proceeded to the north of Italy and the target of Verona.

"On the bomb run the flak was very intense and accurate. The bomb bay doors were opened and the bombardier was taking control of the plane. On the countdown to bombs away, I could hear the 88mm and 195mm shells exploding all around us. About the same time as bombs away, we got hit with flak in the left wing. The shell exploded as it exited the top of the wing between No. 2 engine and the front of the plane. This hit is what killed the navigator, Lt. Hall, and the upper turret operator, Don Simon. It also wounded Colonel Ryan, co-pilot Michaelis, bombardier Bachardy, and radio operator Richard Forst.

"Needless to say, frantic moments occurred at this point. The plane lost altitude rapidly, the smell of 100 octane gas from the wing tanks; the frantic call over the intercom for help in the cockpit brought the pilot from the tail of the plane. The radio operator wounded and lying on the floor in the radio room and the top turret gunner killed, blocking some of the access to the cockpit, and the pilot and co-pilot bleeding very badly. The navigator killed and the bombardier wounded. It was total panic!

"The search for first aid kits, tourniquets, bandages, etc., sulfa powder, found some not complete. Novocain, tourniquet, bandages, and sulfa powder were missing. No first aid kits were a complete unit.

"After the aircraft descended to a safe oxygen level, it wasn't long until we made an emergency landing at Falconara Airdrome. The wounded were taken off the plane and treated.

"The two dead flyers, Lt. Hall and T/Sgt. Simon, were removed from the plane. S/Sgt. Keller and myself remained with the plane until Colonel Ryan sent orders for us to be taken by truck to a nearby airfield where Keller and I were flown back to the Foggia airfield and trucked to camp.

"I believe the next day or so, all the wounded were flown to Bari, Italy hospital and later transferred to the U.S.A.

"Our crew has had reunions every few years for the past 50 years and I miss those that were killed in action and those that have passed away in civilian life."

T/Sgt. Richard K. Forst was the Radio Operator on the crew of Captain Charles Childs. January 17, 1995: "My story starts with my crew, which formed in Lincoln City, Nebraska, in June of '44. We went to Sioux City, Iowa for combat training, and upon completion of training, took some leave time and reported to Langley Field, Virginia, a radar school for lead crew training in all weather bombing. Here we picked up a radar navigator but lost our navigator and bombardier. Upon completion of this training, we were assigned a B-17, and nine of us proceeded to Gander Field, Newfoundland and flew to Gioia, Italy after stops in the Azores, Marrakech, and Tunis.

"At Gioia we left the B-17, #295, and were picked up and flown to the 96th Squadron at Amendola. B-17 #295 was sent to another Squadron and was shot down on the first mission.

"We called ourselves the "GRAVEL GIRTIE" crew and formed a close bond on the ground and in the air. In fact, I wondered if the officers had a home since they spent so much time in the enlisted men's tent, and wonder of wonders, even shared their monthly ration of whiskey with us.

"Our pilot, Captain Charles L. Childs, had many hours at the controls of a B-17, and we soon began flying Squadron Lead, Deputy Lead, and eventually Group Lead. Colonel John D. Ryan, our new Group CO, did not have a crew, picked the "GRAVEL GIRTIE" crew when he flew, and Captain Childs had to shift for himself with another crew. On one of Ryan's missions, our waist gunner, Harold Pewitt, was very badly wounded in the left arm and sent back to the States.

"On February 28th, 1945, Ryan's last combat mission, we were bombing the Perona Railroad Bridge at Verona, Italy, which was to be a 'milk run' when all hell broke loose! Francis 'Mike' Michaelis, our co-pilot, had informed me he asked the Colonel if we weren't coming in too low, at which the Colonel replied, 'We'll be all right.'

"It was a beautiful, clear day so I was going to view the scene below. Just as we turned on the I.P., I opened the door from the radio room to the bomb bay and sat on my frequency meter, looking through the open bomb bay doors, when there was a burst of flak below us.

"I didn't want to watch anymore so I turned and sat away from the door. Then a direct hit up front shook the plane. I was hit from above, just missing my spine and lung, and knocked to the floor. I immediately moved my arms and legs to make sure I wasn't paralyzed from a spinal injury. They worked! I was in no pain, but did not move lest I aggravate the wounds. The plane was reacting violently from many hits so I knew we had major damage. I thought we lost No. 3 and No. 4 engines, but 'Mike' later informed me we lost three engines.

"After we were out of the flak area, Keller and Short came to give me first aid and wanted to give me a shot of morphine which I refused because I thought we might have to bail out. Every one from the radio room forward was either killed or wounded. The navigator and engineer were killed, Ryan lost two fingers, the bombardier had splinters in his stomach, 'Mike' the co-pilot was badly hit in the wrist and leg and I was hit in the neck.

"Fortunately we were still in Italy and not too far from a friendly field and were able to land at Ancona. We were taken from the plane and to a field hospital at, which I believe, Ancona. I also believe it was an emergency unit of the British Army. There we received emergency treatment and I believe I was operated upon that evening although I was so heavily sedated I did not know much of what was going on. We were flown back to Bari, Italy two days later.

"At the hospital in Bari my wounds were treated further and I was getting penicillin shots every three or four hours for 18 days. I was in pain from all the stitches in my back and kept heavily sedated. I remained in the hospital one month and then returned to the 96th Squadron.

"I have been asked who was flying in the tail position that day and it was a pilot. It was the custom at that time to have a pilot in the tail, to observe the formation for the Group Leader. He may have helped the Colonel to fly the plane after Lt. Michaelis was hit because I saw him go forward towards the cockpit.

"I did not know Lts. Hall and Bachardy. They were possibly the Group Navigator and Group Bombardier. I had flown with Colonel Ryan seven times before. Lt. Michaelis, Sgts. Short, Keller, Simon, and myself were crew members of Captain Charles Childs and had been selected to fly with the Colonel that day. We must have had another waist gunner but I don't know who that was.

"I finally returned to flying and the records that I have show my last five missions were to Marshalling Yards at Rosenheim, Germany, April 19, 1945; Marshalling Yards at Vipiteno, Italy, April 20, 1945; a Supply Depot at Peschiera, Italy, April 23, 1945; a Bridge at Malborgahetto, Italy, April 24, 1945; and finally, an Ammunition Dump at Bolzano, Italy, April 25, 1945.



"In reviewing my flight log, I note that I flew my first mission to Graz, Austria, November 1, 1944, and the mission to Verona was my 22nd. Of these missions prior to Verona, I had been to Blechhammer twice, Munich twice, Regensburg twice and Vienna four times. These were the most notable missions, but does not mean that the others were not just as tough.

"I left the 2nd Bomb Group on May 24, 1945, and was assigned to the 301st Bomb Group. I left the 301st and was assigned to the 321st Bomb Group on June 14. They flew B-25s. This Group was returning to the States and I was assigned as radio operator on one of the planes. We ended up at Hunter Field on July 2, 1945. I received a leave and was home when the Atom bomb was dropped and I was discharged on October 10, 1945.

"I mentioned that the "GRAVEL GIRTIE" crew had a close bond as evidenced by the fact that we have had many reunions over the years, the most recent was our 50th anniversary reunion on the 10th of June, 1994 weekend at Sioux Falls where we took our basic training."

(Ed. Note: Most recent, Las Vegas, 1997)

1st Lt. Benjamin W. Doddridge was a First Pilot in the 96th Squadron. March 17, 1995: "I never knew why I was selected to fly with Colonel Ryan on that day, February 28, 1945, as an observer in the tail position. It seemed to be the practice, at that time, to have an officer there, with the Group Leader, to keep him informed as to the Group's position.

"I had flown my own crew from the States in October, 1944, and had completed 21 sorties up to that time.

"Heavy flak hit us over the target and I felt our B-17 slide off and start down. I scrambled across the catwalk in the bomb bay while the doors were still open. I felt faint from the lack of oxygen but managed to get to the co-pilot's seat. Lt. Michaelis was badly wounded and was removed from the seat. Colonel Ryan was wounded and bleeding. I learned that the navigator and engineer were dead and bombardier and radio operator were wounded.

"I found that we had lost two engines. With the navigator dead, I used the sun as a guide over a heavy overcast and we were able to land at an emergency field in Northern Italy. The dead and wounded were removed from the plane and Sgts. Keller, Short, and myself were flown back to our base at Amendola. I heard that I had been recommended for a Silver Star.

"I went on to complete a total of 35 sorties. The first mission was to Vienna, Austria, November 18, 1944, and my last to Peschiera, Italy, April 23, 1945. I had eight missions into Germany: Blechhammer (3), Munich, Regensburg, Ruhland, Landshut, and Rosenheim. One of these in the Berlin area, we were badly shot up and I was awarded the DFC. I flew 16 missions in Austria: Vienna (5), Linz (4), and one each to Klagenfurt, Wiener Neustadt, Worgl, Amstettin, and Spittal. I had two missions to Brux and Prague (1), Czechoslovakia; Brod, Yugoslavia; the Zony Refinery, Hungary, and six trips to various targets in Italy, one of which was on February 28th.

"My regular crew members were: 2nd Lt. Carl R. Buehner, CP; 2nd Lt. Herman Dooha, N; T/Sgt. Martin Goziker, E; T/Sgt. Mark L. Swirsky, RO; S/Sgt. Calvin N. Poorman, WG; S/Sgt. Paul H. Couchman, WG; S/Sgt. Ellis R. Replogle, BT; and S/Sgt. Carl Kepper, TG. I was not assigned a bombardier for the overseas flight.

"Despite all the tough missions that we flew, my crew managed to survive."

Captain Charles L. Childs, First Pilot, 96th Squadron. October 4, 1994: "Before going overseas, I had been a B-17 and B-24 instructor and had a lot of time in a B-17. I was a 1st Lt. and picked up my crew in Lincoln, Nebraska. My crew were: 2nd Lt. Francis L. Michaelis, CP (wounded); T/Sgt. Donald R. Simon, E (killed); T/Sgt. Richard K. Forst, RO (wounded); S/Sgt. James H. Pewitt, WG (wounded); S/Sgt. Franklin E. Keller, WG; S/Sgt. Ernest H. Short, BTG; and S/Sgt. Ross V. Sessions, TG. After

training with them we were sent to Langley Field, VA for Mickey training. My navigator and bombardier were taken away from me before we arrived there and I picked up a Mickey Navigator, 2nd Lt. Russell E. Lampka. After our training was over and we were ready to go overseas, I was taken away from my crew and was made an instructor pilot at Langley. My crew went to the Base Chaplain and then the Base Commander and had the orders rescinded, and we left the States for Italy with a new airplane named "GRAVEL GIRTIE" on October 10, 1944.

"We arrived at the 2nd Bomb Group and were assigned to the 96th Squadron. I remember my first meeting with Colonel P. T. Cullen. I thought he looked like Abe Lincoln. I noticed that he had a Bible on his desk and he was very serious. He looked over my records and said, 'Lt. Childs, it will not be long before you will be flying lead with the 96th Squadron.' I flew my first Squadron lead on my fifth mission to Maribor, Yugoslavia on 7 November, 1944, and it was a rough one! My instrument panel was shot, oxygen and hydraulic system shot out, and one engine shot out. When we got back we counted over 200 holes in the ship and quit counting. It was hard to believe that only one of the crew was hurt. I had a spare waist gunner that was wounded. He had replaced James Pewitt because Jim had flown on a previous mission with another crew and they were shot up. Five of the crew bailed out, but Jim stuck with the ship and they did not get back in time for him to fly this mission with me.

"Before I finished my combat missions, and God was certainly with me, I had flown seven Squadron leads, three Deputy Group leads, and eight Group leads, and two single missions called 'Lone Wolf' missions. It was because of these Group lead missions that Colonel Ryan started using my crew. Lt. Lampka had become Group Lead Mickey Navigator, but I did get to fly with him and my crew at times when the Colonel wasn't using them.

"On that fateful day of February 28, 1945, over Verona/Perona, Italy, when the Colonel was using my crew and the plane was badly shot up, my engineer was killed. My co-pilot was badly wounded (he was awarded the Silver Star for this mission) and my radio operator was wounded. Keller and Short were on that mission and the Colonel had put Keller in for the Silver Star, because he was running around patching up the wounded and giving shots. The paper for his Silver Star got lost somewhere in the Squadron and he never received it.

"I was leading the Second Wave of the Bomb Group on that mission and vividly remember the radio message (in the clear) on the Colonel's ship being hit and going down. It was a sad day for me. I flew up to Ancona, where they crash landed the plane, the next day to bury my Engineer, Don. He was buried on a hill overlooking the Adriatic Sea, a beautiful and quiet place. The ship was a mess and it was not pleasant seeing all the blood and flesh around the ship.

"I would like to make a note of a couple of my other missions that were interesting. A mission flown to Blechhammer, Germany, when the lead ship, Colonel Cullen, made two passes over the target. I was flying wing and on the first pass, I lost an engine. I fell back but kept up enough to make the second pass and lost a second engine. Needless to say, the formation left me behind on the way home. We were fortunate that there were no fighters in the area and so I struggled with two engines trying to maintain as much airspeed to fly. The navigator, flying with me that day, gave me a heading for Switzerland. I was not interested in going there, so I took my own heading going south for Italy.

"In order to get past the Alps we threw out everything that we didn't feel we needed, including the guns, to get home. I flew through, not over the Alps, and when we were on the final leg to land, the third engine quit. I was on my glide so it was no big deal, but had it quit before, we would have been bailing out. What really pleased me was that my ground crew had not given up on us and were still waiting for us. The flight took exactly ten hours, which was about two hours more than the rest of the formation.

"Another crazy mission was when the formation was coming home and a formation of B-24s were at the same altitude and neither leader would give way and we passed through each other. There were B-17s and B-24s above, below and flying side by side, and without any collisions. A real miracle!

"Another time I was flying Deputy lead on Colonel Cullen and we were coming home. He decided to make a circle to let another formation catch up. We were at 12,000 feet and he circled a flak area and we really got shot up. A bombardier was killed in his plane. You have got me telling war stories.

"I mentioned flying the single missions. I actually flew two of them and had to turn back on another one. When the winter months set in, the missions became slow and the Germans were beginning to rebuild their refineries, Marshalling Yards, etc. The 15th Air Force devised a plan where they would send single planes to bomb the targets, either visual or on instruments. This took instrument flying. A check of the pilot's log clued them as to who had the most instrument time. You were then asked if you would volunteer for this type of mission. I talked it over with my crew. They were 100%-well maybe only 98%. We volunteered.

"Our first try was on December 8, 1944. We were briefed at 12:15 a.m. The target was Vienna. These 'Lone Wolf' missions were taking their toll of planes, so when the Mickey man became lost or confused, because the set wasn't working right, I aborted the mission and came back home. We dumped the bombs in the Adriatic and landed at the base. I had just gotten into bed and fallen asleep when in come the Squadron Commander raising Cain and calling me 'chicken' for not continuing the mission. After he talked to the Mickey man and checked out the radar set, he realized that it was not my fault and I was scheduled for another mission on December 12th. This time it was a day mission in all weather.

"At 4:00 a.m., we were briefed. Four crew pilots were assembled in a large stone room at the 2nd Bomb Group Headquarters. 'The target for today will be Blechhammer South Oil Refinery and your call sign will be Lonesome.' Within a couple of hours we would be aboard a B-17 flying alone over Germany. The call sign 'Lonesome' was, therefore, appropriate. The pilots, each from one of the four Squadrons in the Group, sat with his own thoughts on this mission.

"Blechhammer, a vital Nazi oil center, was one of the best guarded targets in Europe, and according to intelligence information, our mission was something along the lines of a bad-risk situation. Specifically we were to make a day bombing attack, under the most extreme weather conditions, against a stiffly defended target, without fighter protection, and flying blind most of the way. We were to fly as 'Lone Wolves' and, if we succeeded, it meant that in spite of Italy's terrible winter months, which made formation flying impossible, the bombing could continue with planes equipped with synchronous radar. Therefore we could continue to hammer the Nazis day and night around the clock, in good or bad weather, and supplement the RAF bombers.

"The briefing was a long session and did not finish until about two hours later. The instructions were that the four planes from the 2nd Bomb Group were to take off at close intervals and climb to our assigned altitude. The operations were so fused that each bomber flying a different route, altitude and speed, would arrive over the target at brief intervals. There were planes from another Group that were hitting the same target and we were to arrive over Blechhammer a short time after their planes had already bombed the oil city.

"While I was being briefed, the planes on the field were being loaded with ten, 500-lb. high explosive bombs with delayed fuses, set to detonate from six to 36 hours after dropping. The mission we were to fly was slightly different than those going before us. The planes from the other Group were briefed to return to base without dropping their bomb load if they found they had no cloud cover over the target. We were told that we could not bring our delayed-fuse bombs back and, therefore, we would bomb Blechhammer, regardless of cloud cover, visually or by instrument.



"The briefing also brought out the importance of oil centers to the Nazis and how the route to the target of Blechhammer was covered by huge flak areas. Three secret maps on the whitewashed wall showed the flak areas, and since they could not be copied in note form, I memorized the information. We were told that there was a possibility of an attack by Me-110s, and that we should make careful observations of these fighters so that it would help other crews later. When being attacked by German fighters, you did not have much time for careful observations.

"Arriving at the field, we dressed beside the B-17. It was going to be sub-zero weather so we kept our woolen underwear and ODs on. We struggled into coveralls, an electric suit, electric gloves, wired slippers, fleece lined flying pants, a fleece lined jacket, heavy flying boots, a Mae West life preserver, parachute harness, headpiece, and oxygen mask. We walked like gorillas.

"Our heavy G.I. shoes went along, to be tied to our parachute harness in case we were forced to jump into enemy territory and had to walk out. In the knee pocket of my flying pants I stuck the emergency kit of food and first aid. Now it was time to brief the crew on the mission ahead of us. They never seemed to enjoy the good news we gave them of the target for the day.

"We were on schedule when I turned on the runway, the hydraulic system sending eerie wheezes through the ship. It was still dark at 6:10 a.m., and as I glanced back through the bomb bay I could see tiny shafts of light blinking behind the swaying curtains in the radio compartment where the two figures of Dick (my radio operator) and Russ (my radar expert-Mickey man) were bent in concentration. I pushed the throttles forward and the plane began to vibrate and move. Within seconds we were off the runway and into the dark, dawn sky headed for Blechhammer.

"I was flying on instruments and Russ was giving me headings. We climbed fast to get over the Alps and then the gunners tested their guns. I asked the crew for radio silence so that I could have complete concentration between Russ and myself. Every 15 minutes, the bombardier would call for an oxygen check and after that only the voices of Russ and myself could be heard. The others seemed to be deep in their own thoughts as the plane droned its way through the weather toward the target.

"I had talked to Russ concerning the route we were to fly to try to avoid the known flak areas. Russ' job was to navigate by radar, as we were on solid instruments, and to get us there and back. The outside temperature was now at 40 degrees below zero, and overcast, had moisture in it so that the wings were picking up ice. We put on the de-icer pumps and watched the rubber boots on the wings pulsate causing the ice on the wings to drop off, however, the number three engine carburetor would not de-ice and the engine started to miss and finally quit. Mike, my Co-pilot, closed the prop feathering switch, as number three was on his side, while I pulled the turbo supercharger off, closed the throttle, moved the mixture control to idle cutoff, closed the fuel shut-off valve, turned the booster pump off and then turned off the ignition switch. This was all done in a matter of seconds as we had done this many times before and it was just routine. We then closed the cowl flaps and adjusted the others to maintain cylinder-head temperatures. We advanced the throttles to maintain airspeed, and with three good engines we were able to do this. We then had a discussion as to whether we should continue the mission. I told the crew we could make it on three good engines, and our purpose for being there was to bomb the target and that is what we were going to do.

"As we reached the Initial Point, Russ Lampka, my Mickey man, gave me the heading for the bomb run. We were now beginning to break out of the clouds, which concerned us as we were the only plane on the bomb run and the chance of enemy fighters was probable. I adjusted my airspeed, and was able to hold 150 mph with my three remaining engines, set up my altitude for the run, and then told the bombardier to take over. I do not recall who the bombardier was as he was a Group Bombardier. During the bomb run on a radar plane, coordination between the pilot, Mickey man, and bombardier is essential. The pilot had to fly a smooth course holding precise airspeed and altitude, the Mickey man



gave slight degree settings, and the bombardier controlled lateral direction through the bombsight, which locked onto the autopilot.

"As we continued on the bomb run, the bombardier told Russ that he could see the target areas and a visual run was possible but there were low clouds drifting over the target, so Russ continued using radar. My ball turret gunner, Ernie Short, advised us that flak was coming up as he could see the burst of the flak guns on the ground. We continued the run, flying through the heavy flak when the bombardier said, 'Bomb bay doors coming open,' my radio operator, Dick Forst, confirmed that they were open, and then there was complete silence, except for the sound of flak ripping through the metal of the plane and the sound of bursts, until the bombardier yelled, 'bombs away.'

"I made a steep diving turn to the right to get away from the flak and headed for a cloud formation. It was then that we spotted some fighters coming up and we made a run for the clouds. I flew in and out of clouds while the fighters tried to get at us. Finally we entered a heavy overcast and headed for home. Once again we were flying into icing conditions and we were on solid instruments. I told Russ to keep us above the Alps and try to bring us in over the Adriatic Sea so we could let down out of the clouds. We broke out in the clear over the water, transferred the fuel from the dead engine and headed for home. I had landed on three engines before, so this was no problem.

"The mission took us over eight hours and we were a tired and a very happy crew as we had successfully inflicted grave damage to the oil installation at Blechhammer, Germany with only losing one engine and having slight flak damage. For this mission, I received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"I was proud of my crew record. I was lucky not to get hurt and I made the bombing accuracy honor roll four times. My co-pilot was wounded and sent home (he received the Silver Star for his mission with Colonel Ryan). My Navigator (Mickey Operator) flew many lead missions and received the DFC (he was shot down on one mission but got back to the Squadron to fly again). My Engineer was killed flying with Colonel Ryan. My Radio Operator was wounded and came back to the Squadron to fly again. My Right Waist Gunner was wounded (he stuck with the ship that five of the crew had bailed out of). My Left Waist Gunner was with Colonel Ryan and ran around patching up wounded. The Ball Turret Gunner on Colonel Ryan's ship stayed with the radio operator to keep him calm. My Tail Gunner received frost bites on his fingers and was hospitalized for that. The experiences of my crew in combat were more than usual.

"The crew decorations were: One Silver Star, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, four Purple Hearts, nine Air Medals, and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.

"I retired from the Air Force in February 1961 in the rank of Lt. Colonel. I flew the Berlin Airlift and also in the Korean War. I felt that my luck was about to go bad so I quit while I was still ahead."

1st Lt. Rolland C. Kelley was an Aircraft Commander assigned to the 20th Bomb Squadron. December 18, 1992: "I was assigned to the 20th Squadron 1 February 1945, and remained with them until October 1945.

"One memorable mission that I was on was a long one to Ruhland, Germany, 15 March 1945, Group Mission No. 378. We were one of 26 aircraft that bombed the alternate target, KOLIN. We were flying B-17 #678. It was a little strong in burning gasoline and we ran low on the way home, so decided to land in Yugoslavia, just north of the Adriatic. I can't remember the exact spot. The U.S. had an emergency landing strip there and refueling capabilities, so we spent the night sleeping in a tent and flew back to our Base the next day. Interesting enough, my flight log does not show us landing there. It just shows one long mission, nine hours and ten minutes on the day before. That was the only Berlin or Ruhland mission that I was on.

"I was on the next to last mission, No. 411, to Bolzano, Italy on 26 April 1945. We were aware that the war was about over a week before we stopped flying missions, and the last mission, No. 412, was May 1, and VE day was May 8.

"I guess my most memorable mission was one to Northern Italy, possibly to Verona/Perona but it was near the Brenner Pass. That day we were receiving 'Trail Flak' in lieu of 'Barrage Flak' that we normally caught. We decided that all the normal German gunners had either been killed or captured and all that was left to man the guns were the Gunnery Instructors. They had 'lots more practice' and were sitting on top the mountains (up 12 to 13 thousand feet). Anyway, as we approached the bomb run, we started receiving individual bursts of flak. We caught several holes in our plane. Some in the wing, but also the biggest, about a six-inch diameter hole close to the radio compartment. In fact, if the radio operator had been in his regular seat, sitting straight up, he would have caught some. Several planes' engines were smoking and we could see them breaking formation. My visualization was catching a burst, or shell, right through the floor below me. It never happened, but it was a little 'nerve wracking.' I do not remember how many holes we did have, but it was the most we ever received on a single mission before or after.

"After VE Day, they started evaluating. Since 'points' got important toward getting out of the service, they started adding and everyone that had completed 25 'Sorties,' as missions were called, they got to go home. Also, anyone who had 15 or less were sent home to go to the PACIFIC, although I hear they never went. I had 19 to 'go' so I stayed there.

"Things got real slow. We flew others to rest camp and back, and one trip I flew a ground crew (cooks, etc.) up over the Brenner Pass to Munich and around over the Alps. We also spent three or four days moving a Fighter Squadron from Northern Italy down to a site that the 97th Bomb Group had vacated. We hauled British supplies (food) up to Milan. In June I took a crew, not mine, in a B-17 and flew to Cairo and Palestine for a few days trip. I had another rest camp in Rome in July.

"In early September, I and three other Flight Commanders were sent on Temporary Duty to Naples to relieve others that had been flying ground troops home. This was from Naples to Marrakech. Others flew other legs to get the troops back to the States. We fiddled around there for about three weeks without doing anything when they closed the operation down.

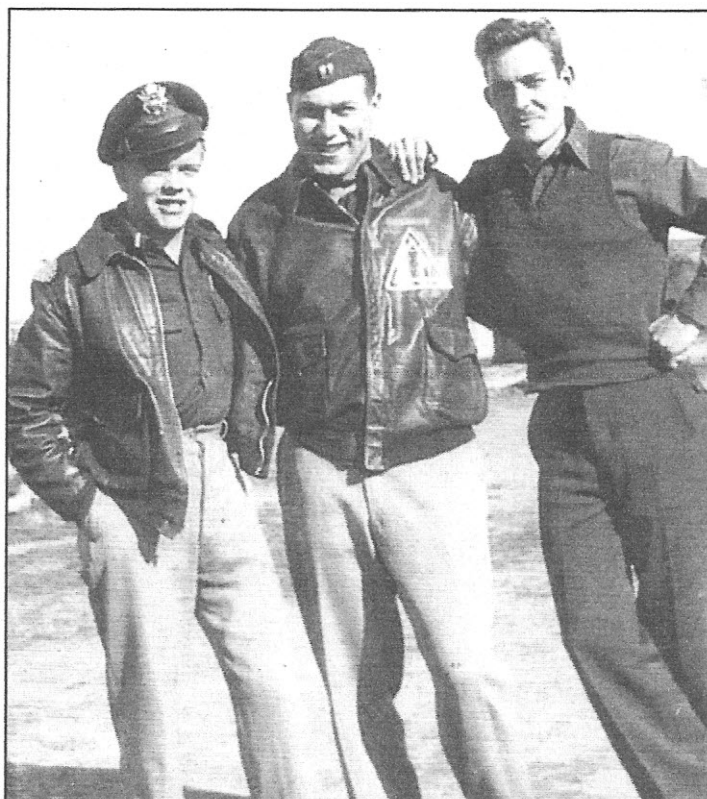
"This is when I was transferred out of the 2nd Bomb Group and back to Foggia to the 97th Bomb Group (September 27, 1945) where I crewed as co-pilot to a Lt. Col. and flew home on the 11th of October. That ended my tenure with the 2nd Bomb Group."



Colonel Richard Waugh, 2nd BG Commanding Officer  
24 February/16 March 45 (Photo Section)



Colonel John D. Ryan - Commanding Officer - 2nd Bomb Group  
8 July 44/25 September 44 and 9 February 45/28 February 45  
(2nd Bomb Group Photo)



L/R - Lts. C. Childs, H. Wallet, W. Torske  
(Courtesy - C. Childs)



T/R - L/R - F. Keller, R. Lampka, J. Pewitt, R. Sessions, R. Forst  
B/R - L/R - C. Childs, D. Simon (\*), F. Michaelis  
\* KIA 2-28-45 (Courtesy - E. Short)





L/R - F. Keller, J. Pewitt, E. Short, R. Sessions - Isle of Capri Rest Camp  
2-45 (Courtesy - C. Richards)



T/R - L/R - L. Waters, R. Train, P. Surprenant, R. Cheney, J. Koden  
B/R - L/R - G. Bills, I. Lewis, P. Stephens, A. Notheis  
(Courtesy - Lewis Waters)