

TONI GAYLE; THE COTTONTAIL

A WORLD WAR II CHRONOLOGY OF MILITARY SERVICE TIME AS EXPERIENCED BY BEUFORD L. LOWRANCE, SN 37397918, RADIO OPERATOR AND WAIST GUNNER ON A B-24 (H) LIBERATOR BOMBER NAMED TONI GAYLE. ASSIGNED TO THE FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE, 47th AIR WING, AND THE 450th BOMB GROUP, CONSISTING OF THE 720th, 721st, 722nd AND 723rd BOMB SQUADRONS. THE TONI GAYLE AND ITS CREW WAS ASSIGNED TO THE 722nd SQUADRON. THE FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE WAS ACTIVATED ON NOVEMBER 1, 1943, WITH HEADQUARTERS AT TUNIS, TUNISIA, AND LATER MOVED TO AN AIRFIELD IN THE FOGGIA, ITALY AREA. THE 450th BOMB GROUP ARRIVED AT ITS ASSIGNED BASE NEAR MANDURIA, ITALY, IN LATE DECEMBER, 1943, AND EARLY JANUARY, 1944 AFTER BEING FORMED AND TRAINED AT ALAMOGORDO ARMY AIR BASE IN NEW MEXICO. NARRATIVE INCLUDES SERVICE TIME FROM INDUCTION TO SEPARATION FROM SERVICE. COMPILED AND WRITTEN IN 1997-98.

11/17/42. Left Hartville, MO for Jefferson Barracks, MO for physical exam prior to induction into service of the United States. Passed my physical and returned to Hartville on 11/20/42 for one week to wind up personal affairs before induction into active military service.

11/21/42. Married to Inabelle Goss of Mansfield, MO by the Rev. W. A. Wilson at the Methodist Parsonage in Seymour, MO on a cold, rainy Saturday evening. On the following Monday morning I left Mansfield and my new bride for whatever the future might hold. A very short Honeymoon.

11/23/42. Returned to Jefferson Barracks, inducted and sworn into service with the weather cold, rainy and dreary. GI winter OD dress uniform and fatigue clothing were issued here and we were not again permitted to wear civilian clothing until mustered from service after the war ended. We were tested here for technical skills that we might be capable of learning and were permitted to request a preferred branch of service as well as a technical training field. We had no guaranty our choice would be granted. Where the need was greatest, that is where assignments were made. I requested the Army Air Force as my preferred branch of service and radio school as my technical training choice and both were eventually granted. At that time the Air Force was a branch of the U. S. Army and not a separate division of the U. S. Armed Forces. The Air Force had its beginning in WW I as a Section of the Signal Corp. and was known as the Air Corp. Here we were instructed to: "Form a line, drop your pants and milk it [penis] down". Our first "Short Arm" exam for VD (Venereal Disease, now known as STD's) a ritual we were to go through every payday, the last of each month. If it dripped, you were in deep Doo Doo. We were always paid in cash, except for allotments deducted to send home.

While at Jeff Barracks we were bivouacked in 16' x 16' canvas tents with wooden

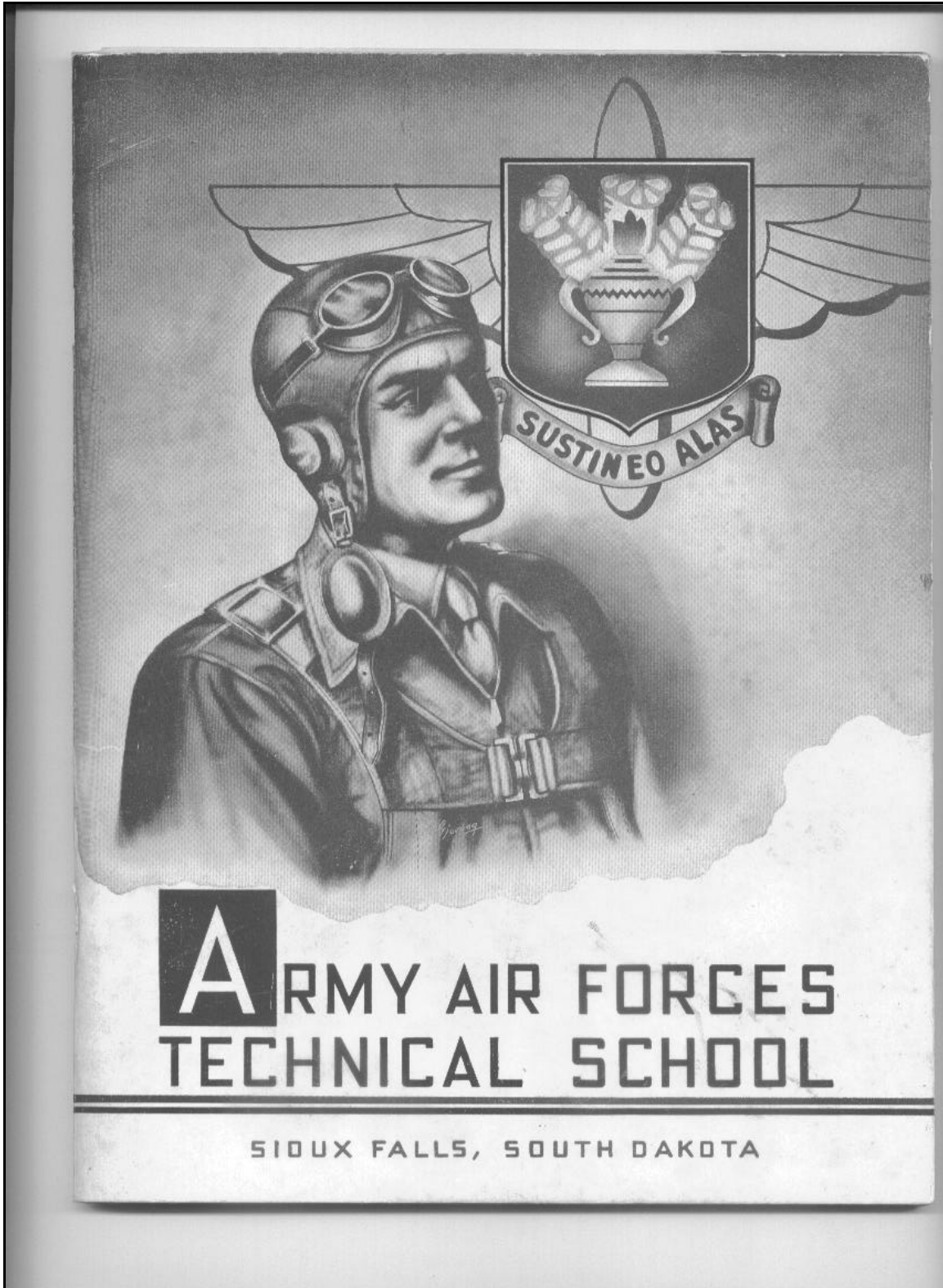
floors with wooden sides. The tents were heated by small pot belly coal stoves and we slept on folding canvas camp cots with eight or more occupying each tent with no electricity or other conveniences or amenities available. About a week was spent at JB in processing of the new inductees. Then we were put on a troop train headed east with no idea as to our destination.

12/03/42. Arrived at St. Petersburg, FL around 1:00 P. M. Thursday. Made the Air Force as I had requested. St. Petersburg was primarily a retirement and resort city with a population of mostly wealthy, elderly retired people. The Air Force had taken over most of the major hotels, cafeterias, and eating establishments for troop training purposes. The hotels served as barracks and the eating establishments as mess halls. Donald Adamson and I were assigned as roommates in the Hotel Albemarle, some ten stories tall. We were both from Wright County; MO. Adamson was my roommate for the thirteen weeks of basic training. Basic training was done on the city streets and parks of St. Pete. We pulled K. P. and guard duty in and around the hotels and eating establishments and I pulled my share of both. K. P. was especially treacherous as the cafeteria floors were made of vitreous tile and very slippery when wet with soapy water, which was always. It seemed my specialty was washing the dirty dishes. If we broke a dish, we bought it and signed a statement of charges for its cost that was deducted from our next pay allotment of \$50.00 per month. It was not all bad, however. Some of the best apple pie I have ever eaten was baked in these kitchens. I did not mind K. P. so much as I had access, sneaky though it was, to all the apple pie I could eat and I could surely eat my share. I spent about a week following basic awaiting a troop train before heading for my unknown new assignment. Most of the Company had already moved on to other camps and assignments. A very nice city to be assigned to for basic training.

1943

02/02/43. About this date we left St. Petersburg on a troop train day coach headed north. We had been ordered to ship our duffel bags and winter gear in the baggage car, except for our dress uniforms that we were wearing. We were delighted, as common logic would indicate we were headed for a mild winter climate. However, our troop train headed north and we soon learned that Army logic had nothing to do with common sense. A couple of days later we arrived in the Chicago, IL, railroad yards on the shores of Lake Michigan. Our day coach, along with one other coach, a mess car and baggage car were disconnected from the rest of the train and sidetracked at the Chicago railroad yards. We were there for three nights and two days with no heat, lights or water hookups. An M P was stationed at each exit and we were allowed off the coach only to eat in the mess car. I do not recall how we handled latrine; dumped on the tracks, I guess. The coach's water tanks must have been refilled periodically. Temperatures were near zero. What a

mess car but that was another world and totally inaccessible to us.





Part of the June 15, 1943, graduating Radio School class , Sioux Falls, SD Army Air Base. I am next to last from right in picture above.

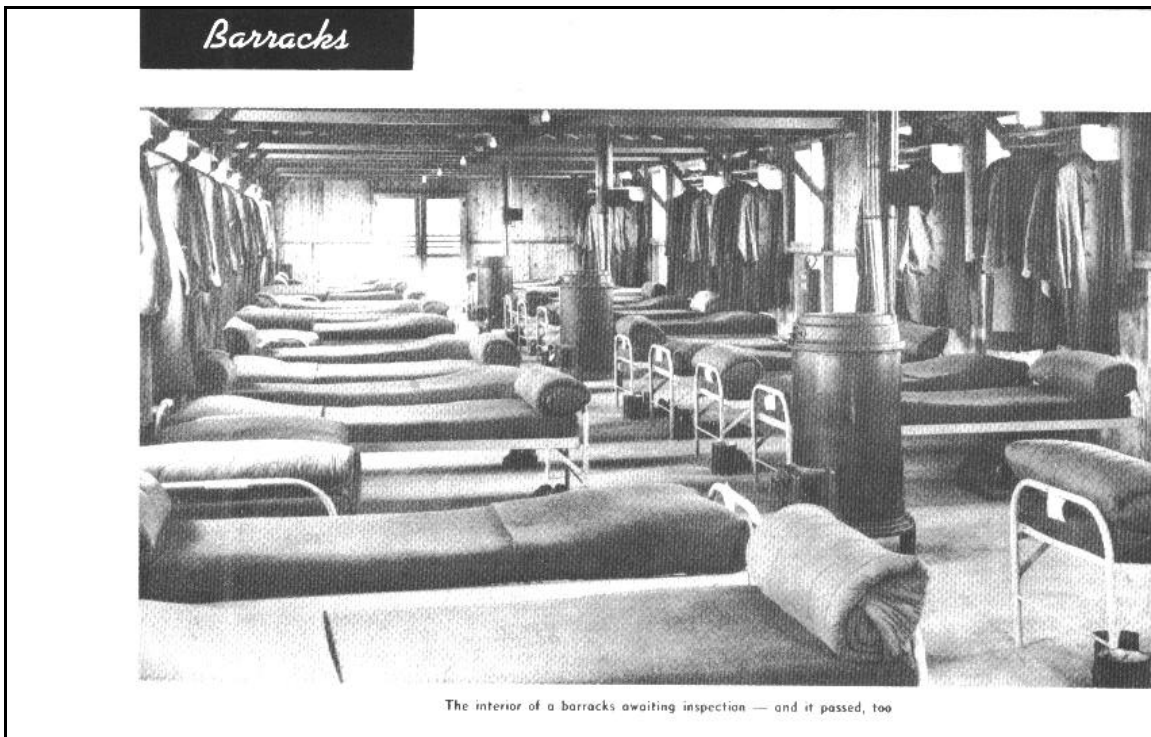
02/09/43. It was about this date we arrived in Sioux Falls, SD, after having left Chicago a couple of days or so earlier. It took most of this time to thaw out. My new assignment was to the Sioux Falls Army Air Force Radio Technical Training School. This was one of the hundreds of temporary bases thrown together at minimum costs for troop training purposes. The barracks were known as “tar paper shacks” and single story. The buildings were of wood frame construction with rough sheeting lumber on the outside and this was covered with rolls of black tar impregnated paper. The tarpaper was stripped with lath boards to hold it in place as the paper had no strength in itself and the winds were fierce. There were no inside ceilings or wall sheeting. Just the wall studding, ceiling joists and roof rafters. There were four, perhaps six, single bulbs equally spaced down the building center which lighted each building. Three coal fired stoves, down the building center, supplied heat. There were sixteen single bunk beds along each wall housing thirty-two G. I. 's per building. The stockpile of coal, along the railroad spur was unbelievable. It must have been fifty or more feet wide at its base and 20-25 feet high and was at least one-fourth mile long. A coal bin was placed at the rear of each building and we had to keep the stoves stoked with coal for heat. Showers and latrines were in separate buildings to the rear of the barracks, probably one for each three barracks.

The technical school term ran for eighteen weeks and there were 263 graduating in our class, with graduation on June 15, 1943. The course consisted of radio mechanics and learning the Morse code. I seemed to do very well in both. Students were given only a grade of pass or fail. It may be I was best in code as I reached a hand copying speed of 37 WPM (words per minute), about the maximum speed one could attain in hand printing. Had I been able to take a typing class in high school I could probably have achieved a copying speed of 60-65 WPM. We memorized the Morse code in mixed five letter-number segments sent by a code machine through our earphones. Starting at ones lowest speed of comprehension and stepping up the speed by five WPM until one reached his maximum ability to copy. To pass the code test for graduation we had to achieve a minimum sending speed of 10 WPM and 15 WPM for receiving. We were allowed no more than three errors in each five-minute segment for five consecutive transmission periods.

On graduation my orders had been cut to enter advanced radio school at a college campus in Madison Wisconsin. But alas, this was not to be. I took the German measles before shipping out and this, forever, changed the direction of my military service. I have Often wondered what might have been had I not taken the measles. The advanced schooling at Madison likely would have put me in aircraft control tower work. Would I

have continued in this profession in civilian life? Probably. If so, I could have been among those fired by President Ronald Reagan in the 1986 Air Controllers strike.

Inabelle came to Sioux Falls to be with me for a month or so in May. We were unable to be together much, however, as I was confined to base, except for an occasional overnight pass. Never the less, it was a happy time for me. She came by rail and was misdirected at a transfer point, causing her, not only to arrive late, but also to come in at a different railroad station than expected. She was to arrive at noon but the train was late and when it did arrive she was not on it. I was nearly frantic as my pass expired at 5:00 PM and I had no idea what to do except wait. Finally, around 2: o'clock, talked to the



station agent and he suggested she may have arrived at another station across town. I hoofed it over there as fast as my legs would carry me, as I had no money for cab fare, and that is where I found her. What a relief! I learned later there was a half dozen or more railroads coming into Sioux Falls and each had its own station. I had enough money for cab fare to the apartment, previously rented, in a private home and by that time we arrived there my pass had expired. Fortunately, the guard on duty at the base entrance was not too alert and I sneaked through without incident, other than being half scared to death of being caught. I was on special temporary pass allowing me to pick up Inabelle at the time.

06/15/43. I am out of radio school, Inabelle is gone, I have the German measles and my opportunity for advanced radio school has vanished. What more can happen? After a couple of weeks or so, my measles has subsided and I have never been so sick in my life. My orders have now been changed for Air Gunnery School at Salt Lake City, Utah. So, off I go to Salt Lake and my new assignment, and not too happy about the situation

either. The gunnery range is near Ogden and little time is spent at Salt Lake, except to spend the night and to be taught how to break down, clean and re-assemble 50 caliber machine guns. We were trucked to Ogden to the gunnery range and I made my first air training flight on a B-24(H) Bomber out of the Salt Lake Army Air Base. This training period lasted some six weeks.



08/03/43. About this time, after graduating from air gunnery school, I am re-assigned to Davis-Monthan Army Air Base at Tucson, Arizona. Here, we were run through the decompression chamber to see if we could tolerate high altitude flying and I had no problems. We began our flight training at our assigned position; I as radio operator-gunner on a B-24 Liberator Bomber. I am now certain of being assigned to overseas combat duty somewhere in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) or the Pacific. This training lasts through August and into early September. The base is the nicest I have been assigned to, except for basic training at St. Petersburg. This is a permanent base and the climate is dry but very hot at this time of year. The barracks were two-story frame structures and cooled by washed air with fans pulling outside air through a filtering system. It was very much like walking into a cave on a hot summer day. We do air-to-ground and air-to-air machine gun practice on towed targets and simulated bombing attacks. It is here that my wallet is stolen and I am about to be transferred again.

After my wallet is stolen, I went to the Red Cross and borrowed \$20.00 by signing a statement of charges to deduct the amount from my next pay allotment. My new assignment was to be Alamogordo, New Mexico, Army Air Base. I had made PFC soon after entering radio school and Corporal on graduation. To entice volunteers to gunnery school an automatic grade increase to Buck Sergeant (Three stripes) was granted to those who graduated and few failed. Although I had not applied for gunnery, I made Sergeant on graduating, too. This increase in grade put me in Non-commissioned-officer (NCO)

status that carried many more responsibilities and privileges than the first three grades. A ten-day delay-enroute was granted to make the transfer. So I boarded a train and headed for Mansfield, MO and my wife, Inabelle for a last short visit with both our parents before going on overseas assignment and combat duty somewhere in the in the war zones of Europe or the Pacific.



THE BEGINNING OF WHAT WAS TO BECOME KNOWN AS THE COTTONTAILS.

09/24/43. Reported to Alamogordo Army Air Base where the 449th and 450th Bomb Groups were formed and assigned for combat training. I was assigned to the 450th Bomb Group(H).[H for Heavy] and a training base for B-24 Liberator four 14 cylinder radial engine, 1200 HP bombers. The 450th was formed on paper May 1, 1943, at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. Three weeks later another paper transaction transferred it to the Army Air Base at Clovis, New Mexico, with key personnel assigned here. On June 12, 1943, Col. John S. Mills assumed command of the 450th Bomb Group, consisting of the 720th, 721st, 722nd and 723rd Squadrons when it was moved to Alamogordo July 8, 1943. The 450th crews were assembled here and I was assigned to the 722nd Squadron (Holy Joe was its insignia) and to the crew of 2nd/Lt. Clearance B. Caldwell. Each crew consisted of ten men, four Officers and six NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers). After our crews were assembled we trained for air combat over the White Sands in the area around Alamogordo, New Mexico. An area of hundreds of thousands of acres of desolate wasteland in the middle of “no where” surrounding Alamogordo. At this time only six towns in New Mexico had a population of over 10,000 and Alamogordo was not one of them. In flight the terrain below looked like a vast blanket of snow covering the ground as far as the eye could see. Many of us got our first taste of formation flying here and I had my first bout with airsickness. We carried “puke” bags on board for this purpose but I soon became use to the up and down and side to side swaying motion of the B-24’s that was necessary to keep the aircraft in formation flight and had no further problems. For latrine purposes we used “relief” tubes, a funnel like affair attached to a rubber tube that

exited to the outside of the plane and dissipated in the air. A BM (bowel movement) was a different situation. If one had to “potty”, one used his steel helmet. The odor was no problem since at altitude the BM froze nearly as soon as it was passed. We did extensive air-to-ground and air-to-air gunnery on towed targets and made simulated bomb runs.

On one training mission, I recall, our crew was flying solo in the Amarillo, Texas vicinity. The weather was stormy with rain and temperatures near freezing, when ice began to form on the leading edge of the wings. “Babe” as our pilot was known as, was concerned about the extra weight of the ice and control of the plane. As we were to far out of Alamogordo to return, Babe had me crank up our long range radio transmitter to see if I could contact the Amarillo Commercial Airfield for permission to land until the storm abated or possibly to spend the night, if necessary. Not having access to the airfield tower radio frequency, I was unable to make contact. As we neared Amarillo airfield, however, Babe or Al Kahan, our Co-Pilot, was able to make contact with the control tower by use of our short-range cockpit voice radio and got permission to land. We waited out the storm at the field for several hours until the storm abated, permitting us to return to Alamogordo without further problems. Our new overseas aircraft was issued before leaving Alamogordo and this could have been a mission to get acquainted with the new B-24-H series plane.

The 450th Bomb Group was made up of sixty-one B-24 Liberators; sixteen planes and crews for the 720th and fifteen planes each to the 721st Squadrons and an extra crew each for the 721st, 722nd and 723rd Squadrons. These extra crews were to be used as replacements in the event of incapacitation of crewmembers of other aircraft through accident, injury, illness, or whatever. Fifteen planes were considered full strength for a squadron and after the first combat losses it is doubtful if any of the squadrons ever attained full strength again. On many occasions a squadron would have the capability of having only six or seven aircraft airborne for a mission because of combat losses, down time for repairs, wear and tear and combat damage. The 450th History Book, published by Robert A. Davis, lists each squadron with sixteen planes and seventeen crews. It is my understanding, however, that the accuracy of parts of the book is questionable.

THE 450th. BOMB GROUP COMMANDERS:

Col. JOHN S. MILLS, JUNE 12, 1943 TO JULY, 1944, WAS THE FIRST 450th BOMB GROUP COMMANDING OFFICER.

Col. Robert R. Gideon, July, 1944.

Col. Ellsworth R. Jacoby, November 17, 1944 to deactivation.

Two squadrons of the 450th were re-activated during the Korean Conflict and commanded by: Lt. Col. James P. Hagerstrom, May 17, 1955 to deactivation.

TONI GAYLE CREW OFFICERS:

2nd/Lt. Clarence B. Caldwell - Pilot. Died from cancer December 25, 1984. Promoted to 1st/Lt. and to Captain while at Naples, Italy awaiting our return to the U. S. After his service time, Babe and his wife Sarah resided in Pella, IA where he became a pharmacist

and operated a drug store. He was also Mayor of Pella for some years and a respected member of the community.

2nd/Lt. Albert Kahan - Co-Pilot. Promoted to 1st/Lt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. After returning to the States he was assigned to an Air Base in Texas where he served as flight instructor. Al requested re-assignment as Pilot, took further training and returned to Manduria where he commanded a crew and made a second tour of duty. He completed an additional thirty-five combat missions with the 450th Bomb Group in the 723rd Squadron. At that time the number of combat missions had been reduced from fifty to thirty-five in the 15th Air Force.. The 8th Air Force, flying out of England, had their missions increased from twenty-five to thirty-five, probably at the same time. Information on Al Kahan was obtained by telephone after my son Jerry found his name, address and telephone number while surfing the Internet. Al continued with the Air Force after the war ended, becoming a fighter pilot. He was involved in two air crashes, one in which the other aircraft occupant was killed. He suffered severe injuries and took disability retirement after seventeen years of active service. He married and has a family, residing in New Hyde Park, NY. Little is known of the severity of his injuries but they are believed to be of a serious nature.

Jerry, at this time, also located another RO (Radio Operator) friend, Hugo Greinert, who is referred to later in my diary. I talked with Al and Hugo by telephone and had a great reunion conversation with both in June, 1997. Prior to this time none of our remaining crew knew what had happened to, or had any contact with him and knew nothing of his whereabouts.

2nd/Lt. James F. Gleason - Bombardier. Promoted to 1st/Lt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. After the war Jimmy informed me at the 450th BG 50th Anniversary reunion that he and Al Kahan were assigned together at the same base in Texas as instructors and Al had served as Best Man at Jimmy's wedding. After the war, Jim worked with a major oil company in Saudia Arabia and in England . His first wife died and he is now married to a close friend's widow and lives in Point Lookout, NY. Much of their time is spent visiting their combined families scattered from coast to coast.

2nd/Lt. Harlan S. Place - Navigator. Promoted to 1st/Lt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. Harlan returned to the family farm in Iowa and he and his wife Dorothy operated the farm and raised their family until their retirement. They now reside in Emmetsburg, IA.

ORIGINALLY ASSIGNED TONI GAYLE CREW ENLISTED MEN:

S/Sgt. Morris B. Clark - 1st. Engineer and Top Turret Gunner. Promoted to T/Sgt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. The 450th Bomb Group Chaplain, Rev. Paul Steven's, married Morris to his wife Marcia, at Alamogordo, NM. After discharge from the service, he re-enlisted in 1948 and served in the Air Force seventeen years when he retired. After retirement he worked for an airline for seventeen years and now lives in West Branch, MI.

Sgt. Charles D. Granger - Engineer. Originally our 1st Engineer but was grounded for

airsickness while at Alamogordo, New Mexico. He never flew combat but served as a member of a ground crew of another plane with the 722nd Squadron in Manduria, Italy until the war ended in Europe and the 450th was transferred back to the U. S. in October, 1945. After separation from service, Charles worked at Wright Patterson Air Base, Dayton, OH until his retirement. He died in his sleep in April, 1994. He and Morris came through Springfield in 1993 on their way back from Albuquerque, NM 450th reunion for a short visit. The first time we had seen one another since June, 1944.

Robert A. Lanier - Armorer and Tail Gunner. Promoted to S/Sgt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. Bob was from Massilon, Ohio, but it is unknown what his occupation was. He was divorced from his wife, Delores who died in the early 90's. He was considered to be somewhat of a "loner" and is mentioned elsewhere in this missive. At this time he is living in Florida.

Sgt. Leon Levis - Crew Waist Gunner. Replaced Charles D. Granger. Levis flew only a few combat missions. He requested and was relieved of combat duty as his grand parents lived in the Trieste, Italy area, a city we were subject to bomb. He did not feel comfortable in doing so and was replaced on our crew by Woodrow W. Allen. It is uncertain as to the number of missions he flew with our crew but is believed to be as few as six and no more than nine. (See Woodrow W. Allen in **REPLACEMENTS** below for more information.)

Sgt. Beuford L. Lowrance - Radio Operator and Waist Gunner. Promoted to S/Sgt. and later to T/Sgt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. After separation from service, I worked with the family business and other jobs until 1949. Unable to find a suitable job to raise a family, I enrolled at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO under the GI bill and received a BS in Business and Public Administration in 1955. After graduation I found employment in the banking profession and worked in this field for a total of thirty-five years, working seven of these years as a Bank Examiner. In October 1973, my family and I purchased control of a small town bank at Harwood in Vernon County, MO and operated this enterprise for seventeen of these years until my retirement in August, 1989. In November, 1989, after selling our bank interests, we moved to Springfield, MO where we now reside.

Sgt. James D. Stansell - Armorer and Ball Turret Gunner. Promoted to S/Sgt. while serving in Manduria, Italy. Known as "Shorty", Stansell returned to the Nocona, TX area where he was raised and eventually took over the family farm and operated it until his death in 1976. Shorty apparently did not like combat flying (Anyone who did was several bricks shy of a full load.) and was continually trying to get the Base Physician, Dr. Brewer, to ground him by going on frequent sick calls with ear problems. He was unsuccessful in doing so.

Sgt. Johnny C. Taylor - Nose Turret Gunner. Served as 2nd Engineer when Charles D. Granger was grounded for airsickness and replaced by Leon Levis while in Alamogordo. Taylor was from the Temple, TX area and nothing is known of him since his demotion to Private and transfer to the M. P's. There is more on this later in my story.

This completes the list of the original Officers and EM crewmembers formed at Alamogordo, New Mexico. Each crewmembers grade rank listed above is that achieved at the time of departure of the 450th Bomb Group for overseas duty. All crewmember reached his maximum TO (Technical Order) grade for his assigned position.

THE FOLLOWING WERE REPLACEMENT CREW ENLISTED MEN:

Woodrow W. (Woody) Allen - 2nd Engineer?? - Waist Gunner. It is my belief he replaced Leon Levis. The last we heard of Levis he was managing the Rest Camp hotel at St. Cesarea at the time our crew was there on R & R. There is also question as to when Woody Allen came on board. I am assuming Levis probably was relieved of combat duty in late January, 1944, the first month of operations for the 450th. The 450th Bomb Group flew its first mission on January 8, 1944. Our crew flew its first credited mission on 01/10/44, after an aborted mission the day before, and its 10th on 01/29/44. I flew my 11th mission with another crew as replacement RO and did not name the crew in my diary, on 01/31/44, putting me one ahead of the rest of our crew. It is my belief that Levis probably flew fewer than nine missions but perhaps no more than five and No. 5 was flown on 01/21/44. (Morris says nine comes to mind and No. 9 was flown on 01/28/44.) This would have put Allen on board before Andy Anzo, which was after February 22, 1944, when Andy's crew went down. Taylor was busted 03/14/44 and that made him fly his last mission, (No. 19 for me) on 03/07/44. Otherwise, our crew would have been short one man between 01/21/44 until after 02/22/44. Andy would probably have been assigned to fill out the Toni Gayle crew when Taylor was "busted." Both Morris and I, in our diaries, mention crew pictures were taken on 03/15/44. My pictures show 24 bombs painted on the plane and Mission No. 24 and 25 was flown on 03/19/44, with both Allen and Anzo in the picture. Allen was killed in action over Ploesti with a crew piloted by L. C. Snaith. when their plane received a direct AA hit. Snaith was blown out of the plane and was the only survivor. (This information on Allen, courtesy of Morris Clark.)

Andrew Anzo - Armorer and Nose Turret Gunner. Probably replaced Johnny C. Taylor who went on a binge, got drunk and did not show up for a mission to Toulon, France, on Friday, March 11, 1944. He was arrested for dereliction of duty and was given a choice of Court Marshal or demotion to Private and transfer to the MP's. He took his bust and demotion on 03/14/44. (From Morris' Diary of this date.) I am assuming that Andy replaced Taylor and was with the Toni Gayle crew for the balance of our tour of duty and always seemed like a part of the original crew. I have very little recollection of Taylor. Andy's crew flew overseas with Major Orris, 722nd Squadron CO. He was a crew member of the "GALLOPIN GHOST", Piloted by F/O Walter P. Vandercamp, and his was the 722nd Squadron's first plane lost in action on 02/22/44 over Regensburg, Germany. A complete list of all the crews, with each plane number is listed elsewhere in this story. Andy, as nose turret gunner and at the coldest spot of the plane, was hospitalized at the time for frostbite of his face that he sustained on a previous mission. The frostbite was possibly worsened by a short in his electrically heated suit glove, or boots. This could have made the suit electrically unheated and frost bit .KS, after the

war ended and later returned to Mexico City, Mexico, where he now resides. He is married with two children, the oldest son, a doctor living in a town some fifty miles distant, and a daughter resides at home. He operates a small plastics business producing auto parts, has three employees. He is unable to retire, apparently because Mexican law requires the business to provide employment for life and Andy has not amassed enough profits to do this.

MY FIRST DIARY ENTRY BEGINS HERE:

11/24/43. Left Alamogordo, New Mexico, and arrived at Herington, Kansas, for (our overseas) staging area. (Herington was primarily used as a B-24 staging area for overseas assignment for the Air Force, although originally it was to be a training base for P-38's and in April, 1944 was converted to a B-29 training and overseas staging base. Some 3,000 crews of B-24 and B-29's went through Herington before closing in October, 1945. As I recall, there were Air Force, Naval and Marine fighter planes coming and going at all times as well as B-24's, B-17's, B-25's, B-26's and other bombers, probably as an interim field training facility. (The B-26 was known as the "**Widow Maker**". The tail was light on the early version and for this reason, it was prone to go into an uncontrolled dive. Prior to installing tail guns for extra weight, sandbags were used as ballast.) Each pilot of the 450th had been issued a brand spanking new B-24H Liberator Bomber painted olive drab, before departing Alamogordo for which he signed the usual Statement of Charges. Our aircraft's serial number was 129221 or 221 for short and was later named Toni Gayle in honor of the pilot, Clarence B. "Babe" Caldwell's infant daughter. We had some experience and training and got "acquainted" with the new plane while at Alamogordo. Crewmembers stood "round the clock" guard duty with it at all times other than when in flight. As I recall, the 720th and 722nd Squadrons were issued 16 Liberators and seventeen crews. Of my two information sources, one has the 450th with 62 planes and the other 64 planes on the overseas trip. In addition four extra crews were assigned for replacement purposes. These crews, as well as each planes Ground Crew Chief and other picked ground crew members, were split up and flown overseas with the various B-24 crews of the Group. Our crew was assigned one officer and three EM for the overseas journey. S/Sgt. Stanley J. Gerdes, ground crew chief of Toni Gayle and three others, S/Sgt. James B. Macy, T/Sgt. John H. Brown and 2nd Lt. James B. Ryan. A copy of the crew roster of the overseas flight is contained elsewhere in this missive.

11/26/43. Wired (telegraphed) my wife today. She will come to me for a few days. Also went through processing. (We were issued new flight clothing consisting of a heavy sheepskin coat and leg zippered pants, fur lined helmet, boots and goggles, a dress leather flight jacket, a steel helmet a billed stocking cap, a 45 caliber pistol and an official Air engineer and radio Operator. An electrically heated under suit gloves and felt shoes may have been issued here also. Crewmen, of course, always picked up a parachute from the parachute supply before each flight. Everyone used a "chest pack" except for the pilot and Co-Pilot and theirs was a "seat Pack." The chest pack was the smaller and was not worn unless needed but was always close at hand. Harness for the pack was always worn in flight and the pack could snap quickly on or off the harness with two buckles. A "Mae West" Life Buoy was also worn beneath the parachute harness and was inflated by a CO-

2 cylinder by pulling a cord attached to the life buoy. It was always in combat as we were not permitted to fly over the Army ground forces front lines and, consequently, flew over water up or down the Mediterranean and Adriatic coasts before heading inland to our target or home to base. When combat flying, we were also issued an "escape kit" which was equipped with survival meals, legal tender of the countries we might go down over, a compass, maps of the area and other needed incidentals.)

11/27/43. Got a wire from my wife today. I guess she is coming out. (Either here or after arriving overseas, we were also issued an electrically heated under suit, with gloves and felt shoes to be worn inside the fur-lined boots. This light blue zippered suit was worn under our flight coveralls and the coveralls under the sheepskin pants and coat. It was made of blanket like material and was very similar to our present day electric bed blankets. The gloves and shoes plugged into the suit at the arm and legs and the suit itself was plugged into the aircraft's electrical system by a long cord. The resistance wiring was insulated with a rubberized covering and prone to crack from the heat, especially where it flexed at a body joint. If this happened, and invariably it did, it created a "hot spot". If the suit was left energized one would soon burn a blister at the "hot spot". If left unplugged, there was no heat at all as the suit was series wired and required all parts to be plugged in to complete the electrical circuit. So it was either fry or freeze as temperatures would sometimes reach 50 to 60 degrees below zero Fahrenheit at target altitude. Having always been interested in things electrical and using my Yankee ingenuity, I devised myself a hairpin shaped plug from copper wire and inserted this into the leg or sleeve of the unplugged shoe or glove. This part was unheated but left the rest of the suit energized. I never had frostbite but to this day I do have thick callus like skin on both ankles from these burns. We were supposed to carry our leather GI shoes (which we frequently forgot) with us on missions in the event we had to bail out as the felt shoes and fur lined boots were not made for walking. As previously mentioned, Andy may have had a burned out suit part when his crew went down while he was hospitalized for face frostbite. More likely, however, it was caused by the extreme cold in the nose turret. Because of its location, this was the coldest area of the plane, but would have been worsened had a part of his suit been shorted out.)

11/28/43. No entry.

11/29/43. My wife got here today. Sure was glad to see her. Was afraid she wasn't coming. Same old thing, otherwise. (Overseas processing. EM was allowed off the base and Inabelle was allowed in.)

11/30 through 12/2/43. No entries.

12/03/43. Left Herington today and arrived at our POE. at West Palm Beach, FL. (Morrison Field. Our crew and four non-members, left Herington, KS, for our Port of Embarkation at West Palm Beach, FL, on our B-24J Liberator. On the way to the POE, 2nd/Lt. Caldwell piloted the B-24 from Kansas across North Missouri to Beardstown, IL, where his parents lived. He buzzed the family farm and then proceeded on to West Palm Beach where we spent the night. At this time we had no idea as to our final destination.

From the POE location, however, we surmised it would probably be the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Possibly North Africa as Southern Italy had been invaded by the Allies in August, 1943 and freed from Axis occupation to a point between Naples and Rome only a few short weeks before the 450th Bomb Group arrived at its permanent Manduria, Italy base.

12/04/43. No entry.

12/05/43. We leave Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, FL, early in the morning, along with others of the 450th, with instructions that destination orders be opened only after we are outside the Continental limits of the United States. Each plane and crew was on its own for the overseas flight. When opened, the orders read we were to report to an Airfield near Tunis, in Tunisia, North Africa. These orders, however, would be changed enroute at a later date. Our first landing, after leaving the Continental United States, was Borinquen Field, San Juan, Puerto Rico. By the time we landed, I did not feel at all well and immediately reported on Sick Call. The Doctors examination determined I had developed a sinus infection and I was entered at the base hospital for treatment. My nasal sinus cavities were swabbed out with cotton swabs attached to a wire like device, which looked to be about a foot long. this was pure torture. The crew dallied in P.R. as long as authorities would permit but finally had to leave me behind four days later. I was released from the hospital on 12/11/44 but was not to leave P.R. for seventeen days after arrival. A nice place but I stayed on base most of the time, only going into San Juan once, as I was expecting to depart at any time.

12/06 - 07 and 08/43. No entry.

12/09/43. My crew pulled out and left me today. I am to Hitchhike the rest of the way by ATC they (the crew) picked up another RO here. (Probably from one of the extra crews, for the rest of their trip. Babe left me their itinerary for the first day and said they would leave word at Operations Offices at each landing field along the way, giving their day by day itinerary at each overnight stop. They took their time, hoping I would catch up with them and I would later get within one day of doing so. I was at Borinquen Field, P.R. for seventeen days but the crew was only permitted to wait for four days before being ordered to continue on their way.)

12/10/43 and 12/11/43. No entry.

12/12/43. Got out of the hospital today. Guess I will be leaving soon. This is a nice (air) field, so I'm in no hurry.

12/13, 14 and 15/43. No entries.

12/16/43. Was supposed to leave today but the CQ didn't tell me (and I missed the flight). Sure is nice and warm (here).

12/17, 18, 19, 20 and 21/43. No entries.

12/22/43. Left Borinquin Field, P. R. today (by ATC on a C-46 Transport). Landed at Waller Field, Trinidad and then on to Atchinson Field. Stayed overnight at Belem, Brazil. (Bought me a pair of boots in Belem. According to a note left by a crewmember, most of the crew had purchased boots here. As I recall, they cost me \$2.00. Also, either while going through South America or on arrival in Africa, word was relayed that our destination had been changed to Manduria, Italy, instead of Tunis in North Africa. It was in Brazil that Lanier picked up his pigmy monkey. More about this later.) Later, upon getting back with the crew in Italy they related an incident of their flight over the rainforests of Brazil. It seems that Babe and Al had put the plane on automatic pilot and they were cruising along at ease when the automatic pilot malfunctioned and the plane went into a nosedive and out of control. Babe and Al together, pulled it out of the dive by brute force, and thus undoubtedly saved the plane and crew from almost certain disaster.

12/23/43. Went on to Natal, Brazil, stayed for 12 hours here and took off for Recife, Brazil, POE for Dakar, South Africa, and left Recife late the same evening for Dakar. Sure was tired.

12/24/43. Arrived at Dakar this morning on a C-87 Transport. (A Cargo version of the B-24 Bomber.) Traveled 2,041 miles last night and I slept most all the way. About a 10-hour trip. (As I recall our crew followed this route but did not have fuel capacity for a direct flight to Dakar from Recife. They would fly East to Ascension Island that was about mid-way in the Atlantic, spend the night and refuel then fly North on to Dakar.)

12/25/43. Laid over a day at Dakar, French West Africa. Spent Christmas day here. Had lunchmeat for dinner and turkey for supper. A truly miserable day. Had my extra pair of G. I. shoes stolen. (A good thing I had a pair on. These natives, even the kids, have feet so much larger than mine that I doubt any of them over six years old could wear them. The locals of this tribe living in this area were truly a huge race of people and most adult men were well over 6 feet tall.)

12/26/43. Left Dakar on an ATC C-54. Rode C-46's from P.R. to Natal. Made the long hop (across the Atlantic) on a C-87, the Cargo version of the B-24.

12/27/43. Arrived at Marrakech, Algeria, and stayed overnight. We took off in a C-54 but had engine trouble and came back. (It was on this trip that I ran across a GI who had gone AWOL. He had been a crew member of an ATC flying VIP's over the Hump (Himalayan Mountains) in the CBI Theater of Operations and was being escorted back to the U. S. by a couple of MP's for Court Marshal. He apparently had just taken off on his way to another assignment and was seeing the world. He may have been missing for weeks or months. I would have had no problem doing the same thing. Every field I landed at, I would fall in a chow line, find an empty cot in a tent or barracks, when available, and no questions asked. I had no kind of an order and my only identification was my dog tags and minimal information I was permitted to carry in my wallet. This never entered my mind, however, as I was anxious to get back with my crew, get on with our part of the war and have it over with.)

12/28/43. Left Marrakech today and arrived in Algiers, Algeria. Was only a day behind my crew at Marrakech (I got a hair cut and a shave for a nickel here; the hair cut cost 3 cents and a shave 2 cents.

12/29/43. Stayed over in Algiers today. Had to go to town for a Priority slip. Sure had a nice Red Cross Service Club. (It was here that I had my first opportunity to bathe since leaving Brazil. I stayed overnight at a hotel in a private room with bath. How I managed a private room, I have no idea, and believe this is the only time in my army life I spent a night in a room alone. There was no heat in the building and only cold running water. It was very cold but I badly needed a bath so I made the best of what I had. It was in Algiers that I saw my first automobile with a coal fired fuel conversion unit used to convert coal to gas. A funny looking contraption mounted on the rear bumper belching smoke from its smokestack.)

12/30/43. Left Algiers on a C-47 today and arrived at Tunis, Tunisia. (Our original destination orders.) Saw a lot of wrecked German planes. (Mostly Stuka Dive Bombers.) Must be getting closer to the war zone. (The closer I got to the War Zone, the slower my hitch hiking by ATC became, and was by C-47's from Algiers and by truck for the final leg of my trip from Taranto to Manduria.)

12/31/43. Stayed overnight in Tunis and took off for Bari, Italy, touching down at Sicily, before arriving at Bari. Arrived the same day. Sicily was liberated in September, 1943.

01/01/44. New Year's day in Italy. Would have stayed at Bari for that turkey dinner but missed the plane yesterday. Got a plane out to Taranto and hitched a ride on a GI truck on to Manduria. Guess I will be (stationed) here for a while. Re-joined my crew today. (Was sure glad to see them again and they seemed happy to see me.)

Upon my arrival at the Air Base in Manduria, which was some four or five miles from town, a gruesome sight greeted me. The Army truck I was in, pulled up in front of the main Hangar and I jumped from the back with my duffel bag. A B-24, that I assumed had recently returned from a mission, was parked near the front of main hangar. Being curious, I went over to the plane for a look-see. It soon became very obvious that this was a mistake. The belly hatch was open so I stuck my head through the hatch for a look-see and what I saw was a fur lined flight boot. On closer examination, I saw there was someone's foot still in it. What a horrible welcomes to Manduria that was. At the time I thought another B-24 Group, perhaps the 98th or 376th BG occupied the base, as they were the only other B-24 Groups in the 15th Air Force AF before the arrival of the 449th and 450th. It may have been in the process of moving to a better field. I do not know why the plane had landed at the Manduria Air Base. Others, among them was Hugo Greinert in our telephone conversation, (More about this later) says the 450th was the first to occupy Manduria base except for the Germans and Italians. I later learned from Paul Drury, one of the two survivors of Andy's original Gallopin Ghost crew, that he had a book "Air Force Combat Units of World War II" that said the 98th Bomb Group was temporarily based in Manduria until December 19, 1943, and then moved to Lecce. The 98th and 376th Bomb Groups were based at San Pancrazio and Grotaglio as reported in

the August, 2000 Issue of the Cottontales. The two sources of information on the 98th BG are in conflict but I suspect San Pancrazio is correct. These two groups were formerly attached to the 8th Air Force in England and were transferred to Benghazi, Libya in North Africa for the first low level treetop raid on the oil fields of Ploesti, Roumania on August 1, 1943. On this mission 178 B-24's were dispatched, 53 were lost, 5 were written off as un-repairable on return to Allied bases. About 30 of those returning were incapable of flying another mission. These two Groups remained in Italy and were the nucleus of the newly formed 15th Air force. The B-17 did not have the range to make the trip. On November 4, 1943, British Field Marshall Montgomery defeated the Germans at el Alamain and drove them from the African Continent. Less than two month before the arrival of the 450th Bomb Group in Manduria, Italy

01/02/44. No entry.

01/03/44. I've been here two days now and it's really rough. One of the crew is in the hospital and I have been sleeping in his bed, or cot, I should say. A lot of my things have been stolen. I don't even have a blanket now. The barracks are muddy and dirty as a pig pen, have been used for toilets and crawling with snails and other vermin. I scrounged an



The original picture was too dark to identify crewmembers until it was computer enhanced. Its believed they are as follows: Top row; Clarence B. "Babe" Caldwell, Al Kahan, James F. Gleason, Harlan S. Place, last two unknown. Bottom row: Andy Anzo, Morris B. Clark, James D. "Shorty" Stansell, Beuford L. Lowrance, Unknown, Robert L. Lanier, Woodrow "Woody" W. Allen.

old door to sleep on rather than sleep with the vermin on the floor, until I can get a canvas

cot issued. (Our ground support personnel, supplies, and equipment, which was being shipped by sea had not arrived at this time.) After our support personnel and supplies had arrived I was issued blankets, a bed sack and a camp cot but it was so hard I could not rest very well on it. So I used my Yankee ingenuity and used my extra blanket to improvise my own straw-tick instead of a mattress. At the parachute supply, I borrowed a large needle and thread, stitched up the two sides and bottom of the blanket, stuffed it with wheat straw obtained from a pile on the base, sewed up the top and stuffed it into the bed sack. I now had my own mattress, and rested very well thereafter.)

01/04/44. No entry.

01/05/44. Went to town (Manduria) today. Not a thing there worth seeing. Got to take a hot shower there though. (The G I Laundry had an out-door shower curtained off with canvas where we could clean up. The camp barracks have showers, not in working order, and latrines but no hot water. The toilets were an oddity to me and first noted in North Africa. Instead of stools they were "footprints" molded in at floor level that one squatted on to do one's job, with the water closet mounted high on the wall for flushing.)

01/06/ 01/07 and 01/08/44. No entry.

01/08/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 1: Target; Mostar, Jugoslavia - Airdrome

01/09/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 2: Target: Zara, Jugoslavia - Installation in City.

01/09/44. We were supposed to go on our first combat mission today to Zara, Jugoslavia, (This is the old spelling of Jugoslavia as it was in 1944 and is used throughout my Diary) but the target was overcast , so we turned back and salvoed our bombs, unarmed, in the Adriatic Sea. I wouldn't have been any more scared if we had gone on and dropped on the target. I surely sweated it out. It won't count as a raid (mission) either. (It seemed we would drop more bombs in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas than on the enemy. It was a standing joke that both Seas had raised several feet because of bomb loads salvoed in them because of aborted missions from various causes. A few pilots would bring their load back to base but most feared the consequences of landing with a live bomb load, although they were unarmed.)

01/10/44. Today was a real one. We bombed M/Y at Skopolje, Jugo. Run into some light flack but no enemy aircraft. All (aircraft) came back. **MISSION NO. 1.**

01/10/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 3. Target: Skopolje, Jugoslavia - Marshaling yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Fifteen B-24's dropped 169 bombs in the target area at 1215 hours from 19,000 to 20,000 feet. One aircraft had eleven hung bombs while one was so wide of target that no attempt was made to bomb. This aircraft dropped twenty-three bombs in the area of the city of Durrazo, Albania at 1251 hours from 14,000 feet.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: No losses as all aircraft returned early. The Group was

escorted by P-38's from the 82nd Fighter Group.

RESULTS: Bombing results were not satisfactory as most of the hits were wide and to the south of the central siding. Some bursts were observed on the western siding and the choke point may have received a direct hit. A few bombs fell into the city but a general assessment of damage would be slight.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed. None encountered. **Flak;** No flak was seen over target area. Heavy flak of slight intensity and accuracy as to altitude only was encountered near the city of Durrazo, Albania on the route in and out. It was quite wide of the entire formation and no evasive action was necessary.

OBSERVATIONS: None

CASUALTIES: None

01/11/44. Made a practice mission with the Major today. (William L. Orris, our squadron C. O.) Only the 1st and myself. Engineer, (Morris Clark) from our crew. Lots easier than a real mission.

01/12/44. Another practice mission today. Formation flying. Flew with the Major yesterday. (Must have been proud of this as I have repeated myself.)

01/13/44. Another raid today. An Air Field in Northern Italy. (Perugia, Italy) Used (dropped) 120-pound frag bombs. Carried 20 of them. The other raids, we used 500-pound bombs.. Had a good target and we hit it. (Fragmentation bombs were in the form of a stick weighing ten pounds each and strapped together in clusters of twelve per bomb to make up a 120-pound bomb cluster. On release over the target, the straps were released from the cluster by a pin attached to a wire, which in turn was attached to the bomb racks of the plane. On release the sticks scattered and were fused to explode either on impact or a few feet above the ground. They were similar to a hand grenade in construction and on explosion the shrapnel worked with the same deadly effect on ground personnel, vehicles or on planes on an airfield.) **MISSION NO. 2.**

01/13/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 4. Target: Perugia, Italy - Airdrome.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Five early returns, two of these at home base, the other three at nearby fields, coming home when runway obstruction was cleared. All returns due to mechanical failure. The Group was escorted by P-38's from the 82nd. Fighter Group.

RESULTS: Bombing results not observed due to haze and clouds over target area. Visibility over target was very poor. Only two crews claim to have seen target. An overall haze covered area, while scattered clouds of thick density were around and over target.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters: Seven** encounters with enemy aircraft. From two to five ME-109's attacking at one time. One ship reported FW-190's. Attacks were from 5 to 7 O'clock from high to medium level. Attacks were pressed from 5 yards. Minor

damage to five of our aircraft. **Flak:** Heavy type flak reported over Assisi, Foligno, and Valfabbrica, of moderate intensity, accurate. Heavy type, slight and inaccurate over target. Seven of our aircraft hit by flak with minor damage. P-38 escort.

OBSERVATIONS: No observations of importance relating to fixed targets. One ship reports two P-38's attacking an enemy aircraft that was probably damaged.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450th CO) Kingsman Gideon Lehman

01/14/44. Another raids today. This one counted, too. It was at Mostar, Jugo. All came back. **MISSION NO. 3.**

01/14/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 5. Target; Mostar, Jugoslavia - Town.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-five B-24's dropped 90.5 tons of 500 lb. Demo. bombs in the target area at 1040 - 1052 hours from 20,000 - 21,000 feet. Disposition of bombs in missing aircraft unknown. Eight other aircraft jettisoned bombs in Adriatic Sea due to early returns or inability to bomb at target.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were five early returns to home base. Of these early returns, one aircraft dropped 12 x 500 in area of Porto Largo, Island of Lagosta. Four other aircraft early returns jettisoned in the Adriatic Sea enroute back to home base. All early returns due to mechanical failure. The Group was escorted by P38's from the 82nd. Fighter Group.

RESULTS: Seventeen of our planes claimed to have hit target with all bombs. Seven aircraft went wide and claimed hits on Mostar Airdrome. Three other ships reported hits on road and bridge approximately one mile NW of target. Day, April 6, 1944. (The front line stretched to the Abbey Casino, a Monastery atop an almost impregnable granite bluff in the rough mountainous area Northwest of Naples, and across the rest of Italy.)

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Three encounters with ME-109's. All contacts near target and back to Adriatic Coast. One aircraft attacked by seven ME-109's. Second bomber reports passed by four or five ME-109's from high rear, with exact location not stated. Third bomber reports three ME-109's or FW-190's at 1050 hours, just beyond target at 1050 hours at 20,000 feet, coming out of sun at 11 O'clock high. On one pass, enemy aircraft trailed smoke after break off. No damage resulting from fighter attacks as per reports. **Flak:** Reported in target area and over Mostar Airdrome. Heavy type, moderate to intense, accurate over target area and Airdrome. Twenty aircraft hit by flak One plane reported failure of engine from same cause.

OBSERVATIONS: Several of our aircraft reported one ME-109 shot down in flames by a P-38 SW of target at 1100 hours. Nine of our aircraft reported seeing a B-24 explode

over target at 1100 hours. Various reports indicate from one to four parachutes seen. One bomber lost to flak. Twenty aircraft received flak damage. Two crewmen wounded by flak.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith

Kaecker

Orris (722nd CO)

Lehman

01/15/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 6. Target: Prato, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

01/15/44. None today. (no mission) Our plane went (on a mission) but not our crew. Some other crew flew it. (Morris has listed a mission to Prato, Italy, but shows it as S/D for us.)

01/16/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 7. Target; Ossopo, Italy - Airdrome.

01/16/44. Started on a mission today and had engine trouble. had to dump our bombs and come home.

01/17/44. No entry.

01/17/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 8. Target; Arrezzo, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

1/18/44. No entry

01/18/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 9. Target; Pisa, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

01/19/44. Went to Esino in Northern Italy on today's raid. Bombed an airfield. Did a darn good job, too. No flak or fighters. All our planes came back. So far, to date, the 450th Bomb Group has only lost one crew and two ships. (planes) None is missing from the 722nd Squadron. **MISSION NO. 4.** (Morris has Perugia, Italy. Target I listed above is in error.)

01/19/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 10. Target; Perugia, Italy - Airdrome. Alternate: Iesi, Italy, Airdrome.

CHRONOLOGY: Twenty-seven B-24's dropped 67.5 tons of 500lb Demo. bombs at 1225 hours from 21,000 feet on the alternative target. One plane jettisoned bombs inland while off course Northeast of Florence. Another jettisoned in sea enroute to home base.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were no early returns. The Primary target was not bombed. The leading group apparently did not turn inland on course. In our maneuvers to follow, our Group became detached due to poor visibility. After going inland toward Florence area and being unable to find initial point, (I. P.) our Group turned toward coast and alternate target at Iesi. All our aircraft returned to base. The Group was escorted by P-38's from the 82nd. Fighter Group.

RESULTS: The alternate target at Iesi was claimed well hit with hangars possibly

destroyed. Hits claimed on railroad track leading to airdrome.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Was seen from the NW corner of the Iesi Airdrome, unknown number of guns. Heavy type, moderate and inaccurate.

OBSERVATIONS: Were limited by poor visibility with the following reported. An eight-ship merchant vessel convoy seen 15 miles north of Barie, headed toward Barie, observed at 1013 hours from 20,000 feet. Much activity apparent in marshaling yards at Porto D' Portenza. Observed at 1120 hours from 20,000 feet. No shipping in harbor.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith	Kaecker	Orris (722 nd CO)	Galvin
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01/20/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 11. Target; Guidonia, Italy - Airdrome

01/20/44. No entry. “*Lowrance and I went to see Jimm and went into Lecce to the Red Cross and had a very nice time. Grunert (Hugo Greinert?) was along with us so we really had fun with him.” (Hugo was a RO friend of mine on another crew. I found out later that his crew was with the 722nd. His plane had an engine hit by flak on a mission over Regensburg, Germany and on their return, the plane could not regain lost altitude to fly over the Alps and the crew had to bail out. They made their way to Yugoslavia, got picked up by Tito’s Partisans and a couple of months later a C-54 flew into a Jugoslavian airfield and picked up a load of downed airmen and flew them back to Italy. He came by our barracks for a visit before heading back to the States. The war was over for him. I was to see him and his wife later, along with Bob Lanier in Miami Beach, FL on R & R.)

01/21/44. I’ll never forget today. We had to feather a prop, after we had headed inland, (from the Mediterranean) to the target) and come in. (back to base.) (Prop feathering is angling the propeller blade to point forward so its leading edge will face the air-stream head on and not windmill.) Dropped our bombs (in the Mediterranean Sea) and started home. I was scared. **MISSION NO. 5.** “*..... went to a M/Y at Prato, Italy. When climbing to our altitude our No. 1 engine went out. The oil dropped off pretty fast, so Babe feathered it and we came over the coast dropped our bombs and they put the flack to us. Just as we headed back to sea, four ME 109’s jumped our tail. We got out over a convoy. Two Spits were out there so they came over us and I fired, also some of the others, until they pulled up and we recognized them. (Then) Four ME 109 German Fighters got after us, but we fired at them and they left.” (The tail turret guns fired one burst and both guns froze up. We fired at them with all machine guns and the 109’s hit us from every direction as the German pilots were trying to find our weak point. Then they backed off to deliberate from which direction to make the kill, when suddenly they headed North like a Bat out of Hell. A little later we came on a big Naval Convoy and British Spits (British Spitfire fighter) were patrolling it. This was the Anzio Beachhead Convoy Invasion force and, without a doubt, the Spits saved our butts for us.)

01/21/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 12. Target: Prato, Italy - Marshaling Yards.

CHRONOLOGY: Five B-24's dropped 12.5 tons of 500 lb. Demo. bombs at 1241 hours from 20,000 feet over primary target area, Seven B-24's dropped 17.25 tons of 500 lb. Demo. bombs at 1246 hours from 20,500 feet over Pisa, Italy. Six B-24's returned bomb loads to base. Twelve jettisoned on mountains and sea enroute to home base.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were four early returns. All our aircraft returned to home base. The Group was escorted by P-38's from the 82nd Fighter Group.

RESULTS: No bomb bursts were observed on any releases due to heavy over casts above areas.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** Four ME-109's made three passes at one of our early returns (Toni Gayle?) as it was alone near San Marinella. Attacks were made from 5 to 7 O'clock high, passing under and returning to same attack. Immediately upon opening of action. 10 to 15 P-38's appeared and drove enemy aircraft off. We suffered no damage and observed none to enemy. **Flak:** One aircraft reports three bursts of heavy inaccurate flak at 1143 hours from 14,000 feet. Only three black smoke explosions occurred from an unidentified emplacement. There was no flak over target areas.

OBSERVATIONS: Twenty-three ME-109's - FW -190's seen circling in target area, (Prato) at 1240 hours. Two to three hundred ship convoy headed North with 30 Spitfire escorts and a balloon barrage. Observed at 1100 hours from 14,000 feet. In San Marinella Harbor, one large freighter. Landing strip observed north of same town, no planes, and no activity. An eighty merchant vessel ship convoy going NW, seen at 1416 hours from 20,000 feet.

CASUALTIES: None

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon	Carr	Johns	Gladstone	Word	Siegle
Davis	Kingsman		Colley	Murray	Lael
Hagenson					

01/22/44. No. 6 today. That first one didn't count I don't guess. Got to see 500 or 600 Navy Convoy ships in that big Anzio Beach head invasion above Rome. **MISSION NO. 6.** (We later learned that the purpose of this invasion was to encircle and liberate Rome and thereby trap the German Army. It eventually accomplished the liberation of Rome, but the Germans re-grouped, establishing a new front and the beachhead was contained and encircled by the German Army and became a slaughterhouse for the Infantry. This Front Line held until we completed our combat missions and did not break until the Normandy, France beachhead invasion, D-Day, April 6, 1944.)

01/22/44. GROUP MISSION NO. 13: Target; Arezzo, Italy - Marshaling Yard

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty B-24's dropped 75 tons of 500 lb. Demo. bombs from 20,000 - 22,000 feet at 1231 hours on the Marshaling Yard at Arezzo, Italy.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were three early returns. No encounters with enemy aircraft. (This, obviously is in error as it is not descriptive as to route and assault.)

RESULTS: Visibility over target was 15 miles with some haze. Observers claim a very heavy concentration of hits on marshaling yard. Workshops, train sheds, and warehouses were hit. A number of hits in town area were seen.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over target, heavy type, slight and inaccurate.

OBSERVATIONS: Enroute to target area and return many observations were obtained. Miscellaneous ships on coast including one large CV. Unknown type ship believed on fire in this convoy. South of Rome near coast, 1 BB, 6 DD, 6 CL, 1 CV and 19 other ships were seen. 3 CV, several miscellaneous naval ships and a hundred miscellaneous small ships with cover of P-47's, P-38's and Spitfires. A 20,000-ton transport type vessel was seen in harbor at Gaeta, Italy. Seven planes seen at Malignano/Sienna Airdrome. Twelve planes seen at Rosea Airdrome. At Pian-Del-Lago Airdrome a 5,000-foot runway, three large hangars and 12 JU-88's seen.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith Kaecker Miller Richman

01/23/44. No. 7 today. Our ship (airplane) came back with four flack holes in it. Another crew flew it. No one hurt though. We flew with the Major (Orris) again. Us lucky stiffs?

MISSION NO. 7. “*I flew a mission with Major Orris, and we ran all over the area near Rome, Perugia, Italy, M/Y and clear across Italy as there was a lot of undercast. . (It is unclear if only Morris and I, from our crew, were on this mission, but apparently we were the only ones.)

01/23/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 14, Target; Primary Assigned: Two Landing Strips Ten Miles East of Rome. Alternate Bombed: Reiti, Italy - Airdrome. .

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-four B-24's dropped 100.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. Demo. bombs from 19,000 - 21,000 feet at 1142 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were three early returns. No encounters with enemy aircraft. All our aircraft returned to home base. (Another error in description?)

RESULTS: Airdrome at Rieti bombed, primary target completely overcast. Claimed well-hit on landing areas and hangar line. South hangars directly hit, with other hits on workshops on south side. One direct hit on factory and possibly personnel barracks 4,000 feet south of airdrome.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None encountered. **Flak:** Heavy, moderate to intense, inaccurate to accurate. Concentration of flak coming from both sides of Pescara

River. Nine of our aircraft holed.

OBSERVATIONS: Nine single engine fighters headed to coast of Capri. Five ME-109's circled formation at 21,000 feet. Thirteen miscellaneous ships headed North from Capri.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon Kingsman **Orris (722nd CO)** Lehman

01/24/44. No. 8 today. It was a pretty hot one, too. About 15 M E 109's attacked us. Some of the planes were hit with flak but none lost from our squadron. (Sofia, Bulgaria, M/Y.) **MISSION NO. 8.**

01/24/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 15. Target; Primary assigned: Sofia-Vrazhdebra, Bulgaria - Airdrome. Secondary Bombed: Skopolje, Jugoslavia - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Twenty-eight B-24's dropped 84 tons of 500 lb. Demo. bombs at 1351 hours from 20,000 - 23,000 feet over secondary target.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: There were five early returns. The Group was escorted by P-38's from the 82nd. Fighter Group. (Not descriptive as to heading again.)

RESULTS: The alternate, Skopolje was hit well in town area, Railroad Yards and Airdrome.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; From ten to fifteen ME-109's and FW-190's attacked our lead elements from 11 to 1 O'clock from level too high. They hedgehopped through to continue same type of attack on following elements. There was only one pass before the P-38's closed and chased the enemy aircraft down and into clouds. Appearances of enemy aircraft were dark gray camouflage, prominent white crosses near Skopolje-Prizren area at about 1225 hours. At least six of our aircraft were hit, with one tail gunner dying from wounds after landing at Niece. **Flak:** Heavy type, moderate, accurate, probably 8 batteries ten miles North of Skopolje, Jugoslavia.

OBSERVATIONS: Fifteen ME-109's with white spinners were seen circling at 22,000 feet at 1224 hours. They were immediately followed by six ME-10-9's with yellow spinners. Some activity was noted in railroad yards at Mazdra at 1315 hours. A 30 to 35 car freight train seen North of Skopolje moving SW. Two freight trains, each approximately 20 cars, seen headed toward skopolje. Twelve to fourteen miscellaneous ship convoy going North about ten miles out of Brindisi.

CASUALTIES: One Tail Gunner died of wounds after landing. One aircraft missing at 0235 hours, it was on a heading of 55 degrees as it disappeared in clouds. Appeared to be in control.

PRELIMINARY CLAIMS: Four ME-109's claimed destroyed by our Group. One of those claimed, collided with the tail vertical stabilizer of our aircraft. It lost a wing and was seen spinning down.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450th CO) Richman Orris (722nd CO) Glavin

01/25/44. Nothing today. (Clark flew a test hop after a new engine was installed. No Group flight scheduled.)

01/26/44. We were supposed to go to Eister, France, but the Group Mission was called off on account of bad weather. It was a 1,500 mile trip so I was glad of it.

01/27/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 16. Target; Istres/Le Tube - Airdrome.

01/27/44. The (rest of the) boys made it OK today. The same trip as yesterday. We (our crew) started out but had to turn back. More engine trouble.

01/28/44. Bombed Ferrara, Italy today. This made my ninth mission. **MISSION NO. 9.** *'' We flew a mission to Ferrara, Italy with Major Orris and Babe. Had a very good mission, but Babe had quite a time keeping the power settings for Major Orris. (Apparently only Morris and I and Babe flew from our crew.)

01/28/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 17. Target; Ferrara, Italy - Marshaling yards.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty one B-24's took off at 0800 hours to bomb the marshaling yard at Ferrara, Italy. Two returned early. Twenty-nine dropped 85.25 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1137 hours, from 20,000 - 22,000 feet. Twenty-nine returned to base at 1355 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bombardment Group at 0845 hours at 6000 feet over Grottaglie and proceeded to Vieste. Continued on course to I. P. (Rovigo) then made left turn onto target, attacking on an axis of 240 degrees, rally was made to left and proceeded as briefed to Lake Varano to base.

RESULTS: The target was incompletely covered as bomb strike photos show five in marshaling yard, two among cars on siding, four near river bridge and choke point at the SW end of M/Y and two on the railroad tracks SW of marshaling yards.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** No flak was encountered on the route in or over the target, light slight and inaccurate flak was seen at Ancona, Italy.

OBSERVATIONS: A submarine was seen to crash-dive at 1001 hours. The observation was made from 11,500 feet. The Loreo Canal joining the Po-De-Levanti and the Po Grande Rivers was observed from 19,000 feet to have between 50 and 70 barges. It could not be definitely ascertained whether or not any of these vessels were in motion.

There were 13 vessels seen at the Naval Base of Marina at 1226 hours from an altitude of 20,000 feet.

CASUALTIES: None

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith	Kingsman	Colley	Murray	Kellman	Bailen
Wicks	Carr	Marpe	Guthrie	Orris (722nd CO)	Lehman

01/29/44. Another close shave today. Went on a mission to Sienna (Should be Siena), Italy and (had) more engine trouble. Couldn't feather the prop and had to windmill it back behind the enemy lines. (We thought we were going to have to ditch.) [To ditch means making a forced landing at sea.] Sent an **SOS** and had the Air-Sea Rescue out (looking) for us. Finally made it back though. (As far as I can determine **SOS** had no specific meaning, other than it being the accepted world wide International Distress Signal and was easy to transmit. The code consisted of three dots, three dashes and three dots; as follows ... - - - ... and repeated continuously. Dots and dashes in a different combination for each letter of the alphabet transmitted all code signals with a pause between words. The transmission key was lightly tapped for the dot and held for a short time for the dash. By voice it would have sounded thusly: dee dee dee dah dah dah dee dee dit. Inventor, Samuel F. B. Morse, devised code. By voice radio the Distress Signal word was **MAYDAY**.) **MISSION NO. 10.** “*We were on our mission to Sienna, (Italy) M/Y today climbing to about 20,000 feet when our No. 2 engine ran away. The oil pressure dropped to zero in nothing flat so the Co-pilot did not get it (the prop) feathered. I jumped out of the turret. We tried the feathering switch fuses (to see if they were blown) but no soap. I turned off the gas (to the engine) soon, then we tried to feather it. We sent an **SOS** but it cut down after so long a time till we made it back in. It (the windmilling engine) vibrated the hatch open, and tore the fuse boxes loose. Radio wires were broken in a lot of places. The engine was really burned out. We came back to an airfield near Foggia, (Italy) where we landed on a 5,000-foot steel mat. After we checked our situation, we feathered the prop by hand with Blade Beams and took off with three engines. It was our No. 2 engine that was out. We had an eleven-man crew that day so we made it back through fine.” (As I recall, the airstrip we landed on was a fighter base, for P-47's, I believe. The runway was 1,000 feet short of a bomber runway and take-off was toward a ring of mountains. With only three engines, we barely gained enough altitude to clear them. The hydraulic system was out, so Morris had to crank up the landing gear by hand. The windmilling engine did a lot of damage, not only to the electrical system, but also to the oxygen distribution system and this gave us a lot of trouble later from oxygen leaks. Also, the extra crewman was a cameraman with a huge rear hatch camera, which would drop down over the hatch for panoramic picture taking of the target damage. Steel mats, made of ¼ inch thick steel and perforated with 2 or 3-inch holes and made in long sheets, size not known. The steel mats were laid side to side and end to end and linked together for the length of the runway. Take-off noise on a steel runway in a B-24 was horrendous. Above, where Morris refers to “sending an **SOS** but it cut down...,” he is referring to the long-range radio transmitter. For long distance transmission, such as this emergency, I would use the long-range radio transmitter. The transmitter had an antenna

wire that was coiled on a reel by an electric motor. It was 300 feet long and it dropped from the bottom of the fuselage with a lead weight attached and trailed behind the plane. Because of the turbulence, the buffeting lead weight on the antenna would very often wear and break off at the opening where it came out of the plane, and that is believed to be what happened this day. On this mission we turned back 15 minutes before the target. They did give us credit for it though.)

01/29/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 18. Target; Siena, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-six B-24's took off at 0835 hours to bomb the marshaling yard at Siena, Italy. Three returned early. Thirty-one dropped 93 tons of 500 lb. G.P. bombs on target E.T.A. at 1217 hours from 20,000 feet. Thirty-two returned to base at 1435 hours while one landed at San Pancrazio due to landing gear malfunction. One landed at San Severo Airdrome on route out because of a run-away prop, made repairs, joined formation on its way in and landed at base. One elected not to bomb through undercast and returned with full bomb load.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group at 0945 hours at 6000 feet over Manduria, thence to Vieste, continued on course to I. P. (Monte-Varchie) where left turn was made onto target which was attacked on an axis of 220 degrees. Rally was made to the right, proceeded to Point-Ala-Sparviers, to coordinate points as briefed to Capri to base.

RESULTS: All bombs dropped in the target area, were on an E.T.A. of 1217 hours through solid undercast. Bomb strike photos showed a solid cloud cover over the target and an assessment of damage was impossible.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** None observed or encountered. There was a possible submarine sighted. At the Airdrome at Iesi, the landing strips appeared to have been repaired and 8 aircraft (unidentified as to kind or type) were noted in the dispersal area at the south and west ends.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450th CO)	Leebody	Word	Lehman	Girauda	Pomerville
Davis	Kingsman	Colley	Artzer	Miller	Bailen

01/30/44. No entry. (Engine change on Toni Gayle.)

01/30/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 19. Target; Udine, Italy - Airdrome

01/31/44. Went on No 11 today. Only part of the crew went. (Am I the only one? I believe so.) One on them now. **MISSION NO. 11.**

01/31/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 20. Target; Aviano, Italy - Airdrome.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-three B-24's took off at 0906 hours to bomb Aviano

Airdrome. Five returned early. Twenty-seven dropped 78.75 tons of G. P. bombs on target at 1301 hours from 24,500 feet. One jettisoned 1 ton in Adriatic Sea due to malfunction of bomb release mechanism. Twenty-seven returned to base at 1510 hours. One landed at friendly field.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group at 1022 hours over Manduria, with escort at 1112 hours at 8000 feet over Lake Varano, thence as briefed to I. P. where a left turn was made onto the target. Left rally was made onto course direct to Lake Varano thence to home base.

RESULTS: Bomb strike photos showed hangars, administration buildings and installations at the airdrome were well covered. Approximately 30 bombs hit the southwest part of the landing ground. Two aircraft were destroyed on the ground and one aircraft probably destroyed.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; There were four attacks made in all by five or six enemy aircraft. Each attack being made singly without apparent coordination. They were made over the target area and did not last more than four or five minutes. They were not aggressive. The first attacks were made out of the sun at 5 O'clock high and the last at 9 O'clock high. Credit must be given the escort for keeping the number of attacks to a minimum. Our claims during this engagement are as follows: **Destroyed** - two ME-109's, **Damaged** - One ME-109. **Flak:** Over the target, it was heavy, medium to intense and accurate apparently of the predicted variety. The puffs were mostly black, interspersed with some white. The accuracy during the entire encounter was excellent. Eight of our aircraft were holed. No positive evasive action was taken by the formation.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1303 hours from an altitude of 24,500 feet a white balloon was seen released. At once, an FW-190, which was cruising 2,000 feet above the formation released a large number of what appeared to be shiny disks, which glittered in the sunshine with evident intent of making our aircraft break formation to avoid contact with these disks.

CASUALTIES: Eight aircraft received minor damage from flak

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis Kingman Miller Richman

02/01/44. Got paid today for two months. \$151.60. Most of it is going home, too. No mission today. Went to town (Manduria) instead.

02/02 through 02/22, 1944. I have no entries. Perhaps it was because at about this time four of our EM latched on to a room in another barracks that had just been opened up and we were busy making the change, re-wiring and doing other work on the room. (We moved in on 2/11/44.) Morris, Bob Lanier, James D. "Shorty" Stansell and I occupied the room that was about 12' x 16' in size. There were probably six of these rooms, which consisted of about one-half of the barracks. The rest of the building was in one large

room with the latrines at the rear. There were no toilet stools as we know them. Only “foot prints” to squat in and do your job. All the comforts of a good old country crap. Each room was equipped with two double bunk beds. The electrical supply was badly over-loaded. The single bulb in our room was about as bright as an underprivileged lightning bug. The base had set up its own underground wired telephone system, such as it was, and I “confiscated” enough telephone wire for us to re-wire our room. The wire was certainly not ideal for the job, but by using a double strand, served its purpose. The electrical fuse box was in the latrine area and had 125 and 250 volt supply. I hooked my wire into the 250 volt circuit which, with the voltage drop, were about equal to the 125 volt supply and run it to our room. We had the hottest current and brightest lights in the barracks. We could even see to read and everyone wanted to tap into it but to no avail. Morris picked up a hot plate in town and we brought our Spam and Corn Woolly (All meat was canned) back to the barracks and fried it. With eggs and oranges, Morris, Shorty and me had bought or bartered with cigarettes from the towns’ people, we were pretty well fed. We even had heat from an electric heater Morris had bought in town. I have taken the liberty of excerpting from Morris’ diary for this period of time in order to give continuity to my missed diary entries.

02/02/44. “*I flew a test hop with our new No. 2 engine, It checked out pretty well. We also had a gunnery practice. In the afternoon, we all cleaned our guns.”

02/03/44. “*We flew our 11th mission (Prato, Italy M/Y) but due to the bad weather conditions over our primary target we went on a sight seeing tour and made the secondary target. It was only about 15 miles across the front lines and we could see the artillery fire down on the front lines (firing) at each other bursting from the guns in flashes from the front lines. We could see the artillery fire down on the front lines bursting at each other from the guns in flashes. I made T/Sgt. MISSION NO. 11. **MY MISSION NO. 12.** (We never flew to a mission over the front lines but instead, we would always fly up or down the Adriatic or Mediterranean coasts. The other crewmember NCOs as well as myself probably made S/Sgt. about this time.)

02/03/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 21. Target; Pontassieve, Italy - Marshaling Yard

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-five B-24’s took off at 1010 hours to bomb marshaling yard and bridges at Pontassieve. Three returned early. Sixteen dropped 48 tons of 500 lb G.P. bombs on Secondary target, Stimigliano while sixteen dropped 48 tons of 500 lb. G.P. bombs at 1426 hours from 22,500 - 23,400 feet. Thirty-two returned to base at 1625 hours. All three that returned early brought back all their bombs. None lost and none at friendly fields.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 451st. Bomb Group at Mandura at 1100 hours and with the 449th Group at Grottaglie at 1135 hours, circled at Manduria and started on course. The 450th Group, due to weather became separated. The first element of sixteen aircraft proceeded on to the secondary target, the Stimigliano Marshaling Yard. all bombs carried by this element were dropped on target. The second element of sixteen aircraft having been separated from the lead element by weather went on to the marshaling yard at Sulmcna. All aircraft of this element dropped their bombs on target.

Weather was the deciding factor from the time the formation left the Italian Coast as a solid undercast prevented any observations and prevented accurate navigation. The target was solidly covered and in the clouds the formation was soon dispersed, even elements finding it impossible to stay together. What bombing was done was through breaks in clouds where visibility would permit.

RESULTS: There were no accurate observations as to hits at Stigmigliano but it is believed that most bombs fell to the right of the railroad tracks. The target at Sulmcna was not hit as bombs fell short or to the right or left.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered.

Flak: Heavy of slight intensity, inaccurate flak was encountered. No ships were holed.

OBSERVATIONS: None.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon Kaecker **Orris (722nd CO)** Gottfried

02/04/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 22. Target; Toulon, France - Submarine Pens & Shipping

02/04/44. “*I had a day off due to our crew not flying so I went to see Jimm.....

02/05/44. “*I got up early as we were scheduled to fly a practice mission. But due to weather conditions we did not fly. We went out to the plane and practiced ditching. I went out to see Gerdes (the ground crew chief) about the plane.”

02/06/44. “* I got up early and ready to go on a mission Had our briefing. Was in the plane when they called the mission off. We came right in, and found out that they had called an hours drill due to lack of military courtesy. I went to church though in the morning. In the afternoon we had to drill in the rain.

02/07/44. I got up late and just loafed around out to the plane, etc. Then in the afternoon we all jumped into a job covering (roofing) our barracks. so I worked very hard at it. I got right up on the roof and did my share of it. (Is this the barracks Clark, Lanier, Stansell and I moved into?)

02/08/44. GROUP MISSION NO 23. Target; Viterbo, Italy - Main Airdrome.

02/8/44. “*I got up early and went out to make our flight and our No. 2 inverter went out, so we had to come back in. Then I went out and cleaned my guns. We saw a plane come in from another group that ran out of gas and crashed at the south end of the runway. The navigator was killed. None of the others hurt. After we finished cleaning our guns Lowrance and I went into town to take a shower.” (If my memory is correct, the

plane was headed for the wrong end of the runway and Control tower told the pilot land from the other end. He never made it.)

02/09/44. *”I flew a practice mission with our officers and there was some ground men went on the flight with us. We really had the roughest weather I have ever been up in.....”

02/10/44. “*I went on a mission (to Anzio beachhead troop concentrations) and we had three generators go out. Had to feather No. 1 engine, too, due to the oil pressure going out of range. In the afternoon we had to work on our plane. We got credit for the mission as we got a long ways up there with serious trouble. MISSION NO. 12. **MY MISSION NO 13.**

02/10/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 24. Target; Valmontone, Italy - Town.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-two B-24’s took off at 0715 hours to bomb the Town of Valmontone. Two returned early. Because of complete cloud cover over the target thirty-three returned 98.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs and seven jettisoned 21 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs in the Mediterranean. The leader of this seven-ship flight developed engine trouble and jettisoned his bombs. The other six, taking this action as a signal, also jettisoned theirs. Of the two E/R’s, one brought back 3 tons of 500 lb. bombs while one jettisoned his 3 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs after developing engine trouble.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Manduria to Capri to I.P. where due to complete cloud cover, a left turn of 180 degrees was made and formation headed out to sea where another heading was taken to Capri, thence to base. From a point out of Anzio, the weather thickened until at I.P. there was a 9/10 undercast. There was little or no ground visibility and a bomb run from the I.P. to the target was an impossibility since no aiming point could be picked out.

RESULTS: No bombs were dropped on target or in the target area.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; None observed or encountered.

Flak; Heavy, slight to medium, accurate flak was experienced over the I.P. None of our ships were holed.

OBSERVATIONS: Large fires and three huge columns of smoke were seen coming from an airdrome located near the mouth of the Garigliano River. A thirty-five-ship convoy, all merchant vessels, heading 190 degrees was seen at 0920 hours from 14,200 feet near the Isle of Capri. A convoy consisting of 30 to 40 merchant vessels was sighted at 1014 hours from 10,000 feet just out of Naples Harbor heading South.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon	Carr	Colley	Teed
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02/11/44. *”We stayed on alert all day waiting for a short mission. We got word that we had to move (from our old barracks) so (four) of our EM’s crew (Morris Clark, Bob Lanier, Shorty Stansell and myself.) got a room picked out (in another barracks that opened up) and cleaned it up. I went out with Babe and we moved our plane to a new revetment. I got soaked as it came up a big rain just as we went after the chinks and barrel for the plane.”

02/12/44. *” I worked all day in our room and would just get started when they would call us out to fly. We got ready to go twice but due to conditions they never did get off.”

02/13/44. *” I worked all day on our room again except for time it took us to go to chow and had two dry runs to fly again. Really had a hard day of work.”

02/14/44. *” Was my 13th mission and we had started climbing to altitude so soon that we all ran out of oxygen as it just would not last that long. All the planes in our element turned back except one, as oxygen just would not hold out. We were up in the cloud’s way over in enemy territory in Northern Italy and had to turn around (and go home). It was (so) cloudy that the bombing was no good anyway. Mission was to Prato M/Y. We were a little shy about our gas supply so we landed at Naples and then the fun began as Babe taxied right across a soft place on the taxi strip. We were really stuck deep. they got two Cletracks and a big truck to pull us out. We had a night flight back from Naples. Our auxiliary power unit (often called the “Putt-Putt” and used to keep the planes’ batteries charged.) blew the cylinder head off and so it was out too.

MISSION NO. 13. **MY MISSION NO 14.** (Because we were late returning to base, the group thought we were lost in action.)

02/14/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 25. Target; Verona Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-two B-24’s took off at 0845 hours to bomb Verona Marshaling Yard. Sixteen returned early. Seventeen dropped 50 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs from 24,000 - 25,000 feet on the target. Five dropped 14.25 tons of bombs at 1329 hours from 24,000 - 25,000 feet on target of opportunity, Mantova Marshaling Yard. Of the sixteen listed as early returns, ten returned 30 tons of bombs, two jettisoned 6 tons of bombs in the Mediterranean Sea due to mechanical malfunctions. Four dropped 3 tons of bombs each on a bridgehead, railroad tracks and factory at Ia-Spezia and railroad tracks near Leghorn. There were three late returns, all of which jettisoned 9 tons of bombs in the Mediterranean Sea due to mechanical malfunctions. Twenty-one returned to base at 1615 hours while four returned from 1800 to 2100 hours. One missing, (Toni Gayle?) None at friendly fields.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 376th Bomb Group over Manduria at 0925 hours and with escort at Capri at 1025 hours. From there on course to the target. Rally was right and a course to Taranto to base. The Group was escorted by P-38’s from the 82nd Fighter Group

RESULTS: Main target was obscured by haze and cloud cover that permitted bomb

release but which prevented any accurate observations. Some smoke was seen in the target area and two bursts on the tracks in the center of east marshaling yard. The cloud cover at the target of opportunity, Mantova Marshaling Yard, was less and bursts were seen on the railroad tracks. Some smoke was seen coming from the vicinity of the marshaling yard but it is believed most bombs went wide and that the coverage attained was spotty. Four of the early returns dropped on targets of opportunity. One hit a railroad siding at Mossa. Bomb strike photos showed nine visible bursts on the siding and adjacent factory building that appeared to be destroyed. Cloud cover obscured any accurate observations of the results obtained by the other three aircraft.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Twenty to twenty-five ME-109's picked up the formation in the immediate area of the main target but did not get closer than 1200 yards as they were immediately engaged by our escort. Results of ensuing encounters between fighters were unobserved. One of our aircraft straggled at this point, was seen to be under attack by enemy aircraft before friendly fighters could interfere but the results of this encounter was obscured by clouds. Several minutes past the main target, two ME-109's were seen at 1400 yards flying abreast but no attack was made. The ME-109's had silver wings and fuselages but further markings could not be seen due to distance. **Flak;** Along the East Side of the Verona Marshaling yard, moderate to intense, accurate flak was encountered. Scattered, sporadic flak of the heavy type, moderate and somewhat inaccurate came from the north of the marshaling yard and the City of Verona. All bursts were both black and white while those from the east side of the marshaling yard were rectangular in pattern with two bursts in line abreast, one high in front and one low by 20 feet in back. This was of the predicted variety and accurate as to altitude. There was some light, slight, inaccurate flak from the north edge of the target area but it was at least 2000 feet low. Heavy, intense inaccurate flak was encountered over the Cities of Ferrera and Bologna while bursts of heavy, slight, accurate flak were observed coming from the East Side of a road at Grizzana.

CASUALTIES: One aircraft did not return - reason not determined. One aircraft received minor damage from flak.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis	Kingsman	Orris (722 nd CO)	Clavin
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02/15/44. *” I had the day off so did not get up till late. I went to work on my bed, taking out the middle section. We got a lamp globe as Bob broke the old one.” (We had a kerosene lamp for use when we lost electric power, which was frequent.)

02/16/44. <GROUP MISSION. 26. Target; Pontassieve, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

02/16/44. *” I stayed around all day working on our room that we all pitched in and fixed it up elaborate. We all pitched in and re-wired our room to direct line. I made a table that can retract up against the wall plus a larger stationary table out of the luggage racks. Also helped out some on the other equipment.”

02/17/44. *” I got up and it rained. We sweat out take off and finally we got off. It

turned out to be a swell day and a good mission. I had a jackpot of mail from Marcia. Mission was Anzio Beach head concentration. MISSION NO. 14. **MY MISSION NO. 15.**

02/17/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 27. Target; Storage Dump North of Anzio Beachhead.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-nine B-24's took off at 0920 hours to bomb stores dump north of Anzio Beachhead. Six early returns. Thirty-two dropped 94.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs at 1229 hours from 21,000 feet. Two of those over the target, jettisoned 1.25 tons of bombs in the (Mediterranean) Sea on return flight due to bomb rack malfunction. Returned with one 500 lb. bomb hung up. One missing, load unaccounted for. Five of those who returned early brought their bombs back while one jettisoned in sea due to engine failure.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: No rendezvous and no escort. The route was well followed as briefed.

RESULTS: The target area was fairly well covered with sixty bursts visible among storage dump buildings. The highway from bridge was probably destroyed as well as many supply buildings. The highway to Rocca Preora was cut as well as the road between Froskata and Calouna. Road and buildings just outside target area hit with the results that some roads were cut.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over the target the flak was heavy, intense and very accurate of the predicted variety, holing 11 of our aircraft and undoubtedly accounting for one aircraft that did not return. Crew comments were unanimous concerning the accuracy as to altitude.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1233 hours from 20,000 feet a probable radar controlled flak installation was seen. This consisted of a central point antenna with roads leading out to 15 gun positions. At target time and from 21,000 feet roads in the area were heavily covered with military traffic. An explosion was seen at 1246 hours from 19,000 feet that is believed to be our missing aircraft exploding.

CASUALTIES: One aircraft unaccounted for but believed to have went down over target. Crew bailed out over Anzio Beachhead, according to late reports. Two crewmembers were slightly wounded. Eleven aircraft received minor damage from flak.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon Lehman Colley Carr

02/18/44. *” I was off for the day as we had a supercharger flack hole. I helped Gerdes change the section that connects the supercharger to the exhaust stack. I had to attend a gunnery lecture so I did not get to finish the job.”

02/19/44. *” I stayed around working on the room and sweating out a mission that was called off at the last minute and did attend a meeting on gunnery again.”

“BIG WEEK; February 20 - 26”

A week of intensive Allied campaign against the German aircraft industry attacking factories at Steyr and Regensburg for which the 450th Group was awarded a DUC (Distinguished Unit Citation) for braving the hazards of bad weather, enemy fighters, and flak to bombard a Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg on February 25, 1944. (My 23rd birthday Feb. 25th) The 450th Group received a second DUC (Distinguished Unit Citation) on April 5, 1944, when the group, along with other units, fought its way through relentless attacks by enemy aircraft to bomb marshaling yards at Ploesti.

02/20/44 <GROUP MISSION NO. 28. Target; Caroceto, Italy - City

02/20/44. *” I got up and we took off on our mission, but the weather was so bad that our group could not get through so we came back in. The day turned into a loafing day for us all as it was so bad. We had our lights go out so Lowrance and I had to rewire our lights in the room.”

02/21/44. *” I sweat out a flight but due to the weather we never got off. I cleaned my guns in the afternoon. Then Lowrance and I had a job working on the hot plates.”

02/22/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 29. Target; Regensburg, Germany - Oberstraubling Aircraft Factory

2/22/44. *” I started on a Mission to Regensburg, (Germany) but we got way up the Adriatic when our oxygen was leaking so bad that we turned back. In the evening we went to clean our guns as we fired all our ammo testing out our guns so we could load new ammo. The group inspector taken our plane for an oxygen test and found out that we were right. Our group came back all shot up. Our first Squadron plane was lost today.” (It was Andy Anzo’s crew, piloted by F/O Vandercamp on the **GALLOPING GHOST**. The oxygen leak was part of the results of the wind milling prop referred to on 1/29/44, and we were to have problems with the oxygen distribution system for many missions to come. It got to the point where the Squadron CO began to think we were too scared to make a mission.)

02/23/44. (My Diary starts again with this entry.) My 16th or maybe 17th one (mission) today. Went to Steyr, Austria. It was rough, too. I never saw so many (enemy) fighters in my life. **MY MISSION NO. 16 AND 17.** “*..... We were attacked by a lot of enemy fighters and the group lost eight planes. Some of my old pals were shot down. Our P-38 escort was late getting to us as we were ahead of schedule. I guess we were lucky in our squadron as we did not lose any planes. The P-38’s sure did get rid of the enemy in a hurry when they came along. We did just fair on the target.”

02/23/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 30. Target; Steyr, Austria - Aero Engine

works.;

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-five B-24's took off at 0841 hours to bomb the Aero Engine Works, Steyr, Austria. Seven returned early. Sixteen dropped 47,75 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs at 1200 hours from 21000 feet. Two jettisoned 3 tons of bombs due to malfunctions of release mechanisms and bomb-bay doors. one dropped 3 tons on I. P. (Wels) when jumped by fighters while three returned 9 tons because of malfunctions of release mechanisms or freezing bomb-bay doors

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 376th Bomb Group at 0853 hours at 3,000 feet at Meseque and continued on course. Course was altered, due to heavy cloud cover, East of Lambach direct to I. P. (Wels) where right turn was made and course directed over target that was attacked on an axis of 110 degrees. Rallied right, rendezvoused with fighter escort five minutes from target and proceeded to Vieste then to base.

RESULTS: There were some hits on the target area that was observed to be smoking. Bomb strike photos show bursts outside target area mostly in workers' quarters, in warehouse area and in buildings between forks of the river. Approximately 25 bursts in the labor camp area, some among the office buildings and some on the highway between the shop's area.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters: About fifteen to twenty minutes from the target and in normal formation a number estimated at 50 ME-109's and, 25 ME-110's, 15 FW-190's and JU-88's jumped this group that was leading the third attack wave. The attack was continuous until five minutes after target. There was haze and the attack was in the nature of a surprise, There seemingly coming from all sides. It was very aggressive all the way. Enemy tactics were to feint a close by (of) two squadrons, one slightly higher than the other does. The lower, as close as 800 yards at 2 O'clock low and without firing a shot, slid completely around our formation. Only one squadron seemed to be painted blue and silver and it seemed to do most of the attacking that tended to show a maximum of experience. The JU-88's attacked in pairs closing to no more than 600 yards, usually from five and six O'clock low, then breaking off in a dive. All attacks were so coordinated as to follow in rapid succession. Four of our bombers were destroyed with three missing. **Flak: Over the target and our Group encountered intense accurate heavy flak.** The 5/10's cloud cover prevented any accurate ground observations and it was impossible to pin point locations. Flak was experienced at Riagenfurt and at Graz but it was slight, fairly accurate, heavy of the barrage type. Six of our aircraft were holed.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1146 hours from 20,000 feet an airdrome was observed at Vorschach with four twin engine aircraft seen to take off. Occupying the center positioning(g) one formation of ME-110's, was an aircraft, identified by members of one of our bomber crews, as a Spitfire painted blue and silver.

CASUALTIES: Four bombers were lost to fighters, seven chutes seen to open. In addition three bombers are missing and are believed downed by fighters. One

crewmember was wounded slightly.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
1 FW-190	6 ME 109's	6
1ME-110	4 FW-190's	
2 ME-109's	1 ME-110	
1 JU-88		

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450th CO)	Kaecker	Miller	Flock
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(Our fighter cover, until the P-51 Mustang came in later around the middle of April, did not have the range to escort us to and over the target. The P-51's would meet and cover us over the target with a P-38 Group escorting us to the target and another P-38 Group as escort from the target. The P-51 Mustang had a range that would meet us near the target and provide some escort on return also. In order to gain range, however, the P-51 had to sacrifice armament and was not as greatly feared by the Germans as were the P-38 Lightning and the P-47 Thunderbolt. My memory cannot recall fighter escort nearly as frequently as shown by the S-2 Narratives. It seemed to me we seldom had fighter escort and when we did, they did not have the range to accompany us but about half way to the target on the longest missions and were met by another escort on the way back. Part of the time, on long missions, escort would meet us after target drop and escort us back.)

02/24/44. A day of rest. No mission today.

02/25/44. I can't say that for today. We had rough one today. Went to Regensburg, Germany. (One of the most dreaded of missions.) Hit a ME-109 Factory. On my birthday too. It counted double. So did the last one. **MY MISSION NO. 18 AND 19.** *'' I had the day of my life in combat as we went to Regensburg again. Flack cut our inverter wires, knocked a hole in our hydraulic line near the accumulator and we lost nearly all the fluid. I tried to stop it but did not have any luck. Lt. Gleason noticed the fluid was almost gone. They smelled the inverter, so I went back and disconnected the loose wires. Fighters did not get us too bad as they were after stragglers. Gillespie was hit on No. 1 engine, so we never knew what happened to him..... After our return, I kicked out the nose wheel and showed Taylor how to crank down the main gear.'' (Gillespie was the pilot of the crew Hugo Greinert was assigned to and because of the loss the No. 1 engine, they lost altitude and could not make it over the Alps. Their crew bailed out and made it over the Alps and finally were rescued by Marshall Tito's Partisans, an underground Army working against the Axis Powers. Theirs was the second plane lost by the 722nd.

02/25/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 31. Target; Regensburg, Germany - Prufening Aircraft Factory.

CHRONOLOGY: Twenty-nine B-24's took off at 0841 hours with two E/R's. Twenty-two dropped 64 tons of 1,000 lb. G. P. bombs at 1300 hours from 19,300 to 21,000 feet. One returned 1 ton because of malfunction of bomb release mechanism. Twenty-one

returned to base at 1500 hours. Two (planes) lost and two missing, while two landed at a friendly airdrome. (One of the two planes lost was that of Hugo Greinert and his crew)

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 376th Bomb Group over Noci at 6,000 feet at 0928 hours and proceeded to Bitanto. Thence to Joke Chiem to I. P. (Rottenberg) to target which was attacked on an axis of 10 degrees. Rally was left and proceeded on a reciprocal by way of Valkermarkt to base.

RESULTS: The density of smoke from preceding bomb bursts make an analysis of our bomb strikes impractical except among personnel barracks north and west of the target area where several direct hits were observed. However, it is believed that the target was well covered and that the pattern was excellent. A huge column of smoke was visible to the trailing ships from 20 to 30 minutes after leaving the target.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; While still 300 miles from the target fifteen to 20 enemy aircraft consisting of ME-109's and JU-88's attacked the formation. They came in line abreast in twos and threes and singly. Further north in Ljubana over 25 ME-109's and 110's made an aggressive attack and shot down one of our bombers. At the target, fifteen to twenty ME-109's and a few FW-190's attacked. None of these attacks seemed to be coordinated, but the fighters hung to the formation for over an hour seemingly in wait for stragglers. A total of over sixty fighters were encountered for the entire mission. The P-38 escort picked up the formation shortly after it left the target and there was no further interference from enemy fighters. **Flak:** This group experienced intense, accurate, heavy flak over the target causing several of our aircraft to straggle, and the holing of eleven aircraft. Enroute from I. P. to target intense, accurate, heavy flak was encountered, believed to have been thrown up by one heavy battery north of Regensburg to an area approximately ten miles deep. Our observers noted between twenty and twenty-five guns firing moderate to intense, inaccurate flak of heavy variety. Further along, moderate, accurate, heavy flak was encountered at Salzburg, Muhldorf and Villach. No other flak was seen enroute to base.

OBSERVATIONS: Extreme activity in Marshaling Yard at Regensburg observed at 1300 hours from 21,000 feet but contents of yard could not be described because of smoke screen. At 1203 hours from 18,000 feet, 7 trains in Marshaling Yard at Spittol sighted. At 1313 hours from 20,000 feet 100 cars were seen in marshaling yard. At 1338 hours from 19,500 feet 75 cars in marshaling yard at Salzburg were seen. At 1130 hours from 9700 feet on a heading of 300 degrees at Sodrozica, a marshaling yard was seen filled with cars (no estimate as to numbers obtainable) and one merchant vessel was seen at loading dock located NE of marshaling yard. A smoke screen was started around the marshaling yard at Regensburg as our formation approached the target. A landing strip was observed with 12 JU-88's parked. Another strip was seen at Matteheim with many ME-2'10's dispersed along the adjacent area. At 1248 hours from 18,000 feet, camouflaged buildings and roads in regular pattern were observed in a forest near a highway and single-track railroad. Just west of this highway appeared to be a building that probably was a factory.

CASUALTIES: fighters shot down two of our bombers, 10 chutes were seen to open. Eleven of our bombers received minor flack damage. Two crewmembers were slightly wounded from flack and two from the fighter attacks. One ME-109 was claimed destroyed.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon Carr Colley Cummings

NOTE: It was for this mission that the 450th Bomb Group received its first Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy.

2/26/44. No mission

Around this time Bob Lanier's monkey had become almost intolerable because of the stench it created and Lanier's adversity to bathing. While in Belem, Brazil, several NCO's in the group had purchased various size monkeys as pets. Bob's was one of them. His was a small pigmy monkey that he carried with him in his shirt front, except when on a mission or going to town, when he would leave it under the covers of his bunk. The animal and Bob both got to smelling really rank. Bob, being one who did not believe in excess bathing, made little attempt to keep his bunk area clean. When the stench became almost unbearable, Shorty Stansell and I were in our room alone one day and the conversation went something like this; Shorty: "Beuford if you'll open the window I'll throw the dirty little SOB out." I replied: "Get the little Devil." It didn't take me long to get the window open and out it went. The last we saw of it, it was scampering off to another part of the barracks area. Probably the only wild monkey that was free in Italy. We never told a soul about this. Bob spent a lot of his free time with the "Limies" (British) that manned the four anti-Aircraft batteries that protected the base. At 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM everything came to a halt at the four batteries for their "spot" of tea. Also, another crewman had gotten a larger monkey that he kept chained to his cot when he was away. A cord would not hold it as it would chew through it and escape. One of our crew, probably Leon Levis, slept on a cot one or two bunks away. One afternoon he was napping on his cot and the monkey climbed up on him and "crapped" right in his ear. I am afraid someone would have been short a monkey had I been in his place.

02/28/44. Has started in raining now. I guess it will rain a long time. well, I don't mind. It's safer on the ground than in the air.

02/29/44. No entry. *" A very unpleasant day as it has rained all day and I just loafed around. Got paid."

03/01/44. No entry. *" I got up and ready to go to lunch with Lowrance. We got to operations when we found out there was a gunnery lecture. We had a ditching lecture, then a crew ditching discussion. I did some sewing on stripes for Shorty and myself. Traded Field Jackets with Lowrance and fixed a sleeve."

03/02/44. No entry. *” Got up early so Lowrance and I went to Taranto. I got a scarf, a saw, and some souvenirs. We missed the drill period so we sure had the laugh on the crew. We made it in time to get PX supplies, too.”

03/03/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 32. Target; Viterbo, Italy - Airdrome No. 2.

03/03/44. Completed my 20th mission today. It really wasn't. (a mission) Target was overcast and we came back. Dropped the bombs in the ocean. Mission incomplete and did not count.

03/04/44. Rain, rain. Where did they get the (saying) “Sunny Italy” out of this? This place is just a big mud puddle. *”Was scheduled to fly a mission but due to extra planes, ours was scratched at the last minute. The Wing came back due to weather so I was glad it turned out that way.”

03/05/44. Went to chapel today. Didn't have any mission. (scheduled) Rained all day. It was what we term “A Gunners Dream”. Another old saying was “Gunner today, Goner tomorrow”

03/06/44. No mission again today. The runway is still in bad condition. Still pretty cloudy and rain's once in awhile yet. We did go out for a take-off but never made it because of runway conditions.

03/07/44. Milk Run today. No fighters, no flack. My 20th. mission today. Wish they were all like that. Only 30 more to go now. Went to Prato, Italy, M/Y. Had P-38 Escort, but not needed. **MY MISSION NO. 20.**

03/07/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 33: Target; Cartaldo, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-eight B-24's took off at 0930 hours with two early returns. Thirty-four dropped 84 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs from 19,000 to 22,000 feet at 1210 hours. Due to malfunctions, one jettisoned 2.5 tons of bombs in the Mediterranean and three returned 3,5 tons to base. Thirty-six returned to base at 1501 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Assembled over Manduria were ready for rendezvous at 0920 hours, but since the 98th Bomb Group did not appear, proceeded on course as briefed. The prescribed axis of attack was 45 degrees but the but the marshaling yard at Castelfiorentino was approached on an axis of 55 degrees, The rally was left and course continued on reciprocal to base.

RESULTS: A large percentage of the drop was short of the railroad lines, hits starting about 8,000 feet west and advancing across the target area. Photo coverage show at least twelve bursts directly in the marshaling yard with others on nearby buildings. Main rail line believed cut in several places.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; None observed or encountered. **Flak:** None observed or encountered.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1200 hours from 19,000 feet, 200 oil cars and 40 to 50 freight cars seen in marshaling yard at Dnpoli. At 1219 hours from 17,200 feet, approximately 40 cars observed in Pontedera marshaling yard. At 1225 hours from 16,000 feet, 60 tank cars observed in Castelfiorentino. At 1222 hours from 18,000 feet, approximately 150 cars were observed in marshaling yard at Leghorn. At 1218 hours from 20,000 feet, 75 to 100 cars seen in marshaling yard at Pisa. At 1219 hours from 17,200 feet, new landing strip, and 7000 feet long with two new hangars seen at Pontedera, with 5 twin engine aircraft parked on taxi strip.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith Gottlieb Kellman Richman Word Lehman

03/08/44. Nothing today. Went to the plane to go on a mission but it was called off. Bad weather again.

03/09/44. Nothing new today. No mission again. I guess on account of bad weather.

03/10/44. In a speech last night, Hitler gave the “White Tail Liberators” 48 hours to get out of Italy. No mission today. Went to Lecce today (with Clark and Taylor). Nothing new, otherwise. (This is how the 450th Bomb Group got tagged with the name “Cottontails” as the tail fins were painted entirely white at this time. Axis Sal, better known as the “Berlin Bitch” was MC on a Radio Berlin program, was continually haranguing the “White tail Bombers.” She would broadcast American popular music and do all she could to put us G. I.’s down in the dumps and keep us there. One early morning mission while we were eating at the mess hall when Sal came on the air and told us the White Tail Bombers were going on a mission and gave the target. Sure enough, at our pre-mission briefing, our target was the one Sal had broadcast. The mission was called off. The Pacific War’s counterpart was Tokyo Rose.) *” I had the day off so Lowrance, Taylor and me, went to Lecce. I got a new hot plate. Taylor did not come back with us though. We all ate at the Wing Transient Mess. Had lunch at the Red Cross.... Ice Cream, etc. Quite a nice place for entertainment there.” (This is the day Taylor did not make it back to camp. The ice cream cones tasted like cardboard.)

03/11/44. Went to Toulon, France today. My 21st mission. The one we made the on 3rd (March 3) didn’t count or this would have made mission number 22; instead it is No. 21. Was a pretty rough raid. We lost one plane shot down by a German piloting a captured British Spitfire. Gunfire hit it and it exploded. I saw it go down. It was awful. (Lanier claimed an enemy fighter, but there was some doubt about it. He had to get verification by two other crewmembers from other planes and did so by verifying a “kill” for them. I was manning the left waist gun that day and personally saw the ME-109 go underneath

our plane and back up on the opposite side. On all our other missions I had always manned the right waist gun but this was the day that Taylor did not show for the mission and we must have had a substitute gunner from another crew and he was on the right waist gun when I went back to take over. Since Taylor manned the nose turret this would indicate that Anzo may have been assigned to our crew by this time, as the substitute was a stranger to me. Anzo took over the nose turret and he probably may have been assigned to the crew about this time. Allen had been manning the left waist gun but may have taken over the nose turret on this mission. I would stay at the radio station until we entered the time of "radio silence", some fifteen minutes before and after target time, when no radio communication was permitted by the formation, then go to the waist gun. Radio silence was exercised to avoid enemy tracking the radio signals and getting our location and direction of travel; thereby, determining the target probabilities. On the first few missions Babe had Jimmy Gleason man my waist gun and kept me at the radio until just before target time when he returned to his bombardier's station for the bomb run. This did not last long as it apparently was felt this was not an officer's duty to be a gunner. Janner's plane is listed as lost on this mission in the 450th. History book.) **MY MISSION NO. 21.**

03/11/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 34. Target; Toulon, France - Submarine Repair Facilities.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-six B-24's took off at 0810 hours with five E/R's. Twenty-eight dropped 69 tons of 1500 lb. (? I do not recall any 1500 pounders.) G.P. bombs on target at 1150 hours from 20,000 - 21,000 feet. One jettisoned 2 tons of 1000 lb. bombs in the sea at 1315 hours because of malfunction of bomb release mechanism. One (plane) lost and one missing. (1000 lb. bombs are the largest I can recall we carried and it is unlikely one plane would have carried different weight bombs. Submarine pens were heavily fortified with concrete and large bombs were necessary to penetrate the submarine fortifications.)

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvous with the 98th, 376th and the 451st. Bomb Groups at 0840 hours at 6500 feet over Manduria and proceeded on course as briefed to target thence reciprocal to Isle of Capri to base. The Groups were escorted by P-38's from the 82nd. Fighter Group.

RESULTS: There were twelve bursts in the target area but in general, observations were difficult as it was obscured with smoke from (smoke) pots and previous bursts. Outside the target area but immediately adjacent thereto, there were approximately 150 bursts being mostly on harbor installations. There were hits on the choke point at SW end of marshaling yard as well as hits on the docks. Several bursts were observed on gas works SE of marshaling yard and a fire was started.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Enemy aircraft were not seen until 1158 hours when 20 to 25 were encountered over target area. They were ME-109's and FW-190's and they did not attack until the end of the bomb run. They attacked at 1159 hours and then came in without any apparent coordination and seemingly without any operations

plan. The attacks lasted until 1207 hours and came from all around the clock, high, in every instance. With two exceptions, the attacks were not pressed home with any aggressiveness with break off usually 600 yards in a diving turn after firing several bursts. One exception was a FW-190 who attacked from 10 O'clock high, closed to 200 yards before he was hit and fell off in a straight dive. The other was an aircraft positively identified by crewmembers as a Spitfire with British markings on the top of the wings and fuselage but with German markings on the underside of the wings. This enemy aircraft flew straight at the formation from 12 O'clock high, dived through lead elements and up into the trailing element, shooting down one of our bombers. **Flak;** Over the target, this group experienced moderate, inaccurate, heavy flak of the barrage type, holing six of our aircraft but the damage was slight. The barrage seemed to be the creeping variety as it seemed to follow the formation on course. No evasive action was taken as the accuracy did not justify it. Five batteries were seen around the target.

OBSERVATIONS: the enemy put up an effective screen at the first stage of the attack. Smoke pots around the target area were used as well as ships in the harbor that appeared to be using oil through their funnels.

CASUALTIES: One bomber was shot down by fighters, another missing, reason unknown. Six aircraft received minor flack damage.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed:	Probable	Damaged
2 FW-190's;	1 ME-109	2
2 ME-109's;		

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Colley Kaecker Wolcott McGinnity **Caldwell** (Our pilot and Bombardier)
Gleason

03/12/44. No mission today. We had the day off.

03/13/44. Nothing today or yesterday. It has started raining again. Guess we won't be flying for a while. Not a thing to do.

03/14/44. Nothing new today. We have been scheduled for a mission ever since Sunday. Weather is still bad. *” Taylor took his bust and went to the M. P. duty today. He seemed quite broken up. He gathered all his things up and Major Hubbard took him to Grottaglie.” (After not coming back from Lecce on March 10, Taylor missed the mission to Toulon on March 11. He was arrested and given a choice of a Court Marshal or break in rank to private and a transfer to the Military Police. He chose the M. P.'s.)

03/15/44. Same thing today. No mission. We did have some pictures taken of the crew and crew members separately.

03/16/44. No news today. We had a mission scheduled, but it was canceled. More bad

weather.

03/17/44. Another mission to Germany. Between Vienna and Munich. Don't know if we get credit for two or not. Weather was bad so we just let the bombs go. Flew with the C. O. (Morris and I apparently are the only two of our crew that made this one.) **MY MISSION NO. 22 AND 23.** *” I had a rough day as we flew a mission with Major Orris and Captain Bullis to Vienna, Austria..... weather was bad with our group up there going every way. The escort could not keep up with us but there was so much undercast we only saw a little flack. We could not get the bomb bay door open. Lt. Lehman was the bombardier so I got out on the cranks and he held the selector open but we still could not get them open. So he only dropped one side of the bombs out.”

03/17/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 35. Target; Vienna Austria - Air Drome.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty B-24's took off at 0938 hours. Six early returns. Eleven dropped 27 tons of 1000 lb. bombs 18 miles SW of target, at 1330 hours from 23,000 feet. Nine dropped 21 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on targets of opportunity in Austria. Five dropped 12 tons of 1000 lb. G. P. bombs on targets of opportunity enroute back to base. Eight returned 18 tons of 1500 lb. G. P. bombs back to base. One jettisoned 2 tons of 1000 lb. bombs in sea. No aircraft lost to enemy action. One missing.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 98th. Bomb Group at 0937 hours at 4000 feet over Manduria with the 376th and 451st Bomb Groups at 0952 between Manduria and San Veto D' Normanni. Continued on course as briefed. There was haze and scattered cloud cover until Bos Novi after which clouds became solid up to 18,000 feet. There were cirrus clouds up to 25,000 feet. There was solid overcast over the target area that prevented any accurate bombing.

RESULTS: A solid overcast prevented any observations of results of the bombs dropped.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; None observed or encountered. **Flak:** No flak was experienced in the target area. However, enroute back flak was encountered, slight, inaccurate, light to medium, accurate, heavy. None of our aircraft were damaged or even holed.

OBSERVATIONS: No observations were recorded.

CASUALTIES: One aircraft reported missing, reason unknown.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Orris (722nd CO)	Lehman	Hervey	Gottlieb
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03/18/44. Got credit for two (missions) yesterday, and made another one today to Uden in Northern Italy. Hit an airfield. **MY MISSION NO. 24.** *” I flew a mission up to the north end of the Adriatic (to Gorizia Airdrome, Italy) where we just went in over land and dropped frag bombs. We had moderate heavy flack.”

03/18/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 36. Target; Laviano, Italy - Airdrome Dispersal Areas.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-nine B-24's took off at 0730 hours, with two early returns. Thirty-six dropped 42 tons of fragmentation bombs at 1104 hours from 22,000 feet. One dropped 600 lb. of 20 lb. frag bombs on railroad bridge because of malfunction of bomb release mechanism over target. One jettisoned 1 ton of bombs in Adriatic Sea because of malfunction of bomb bay doors over target. The two early returns jettisoned 2 tons of bombs in Adriatic Sea. Thirty-seven returned to base at 1325 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 451st Bomb Group over Manduria at 0810 hours at 3000 feet and the first wave at 3000 feet over Martina Franca. Continued on course to I. P. (Latisane) where right turn was made onto target that was attacked on an axis of 50 degrees. Rallied right and continued on course to Vieste to base.

RESULTS: Target area well covered with concentrations of bursts in dispersal areas. Four lanes of bombs crossed target area and photos show three fighters and one transport hit. Visual observations disclosed two large columns of gray smoke indicating hits on two aircraft. One explosion was seen when aircraft on ground was hit.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over the target area our group experienced moderate, inaccurate, heavy flak. Two of our aircraft were holed but damage was minor. Enroute moderate, fairly accurate heavy flak was encountered but no aircraft damaged. At a point 15 miles due west of Trieste, slight, inaccurate, light flak was experienced from three small surface craft. These boats were not believed to be flak ships, but rather small surface craft who were at this point when the formation flew over.

OBSERVATIONS: A P-38 was seen to ditch in Adriatic Sea at 1032 hours. Seen from 19,000 feet. A B-24, probably tan color, thought to ditch in Adriatic Sea at 1132 hours. Seen from 14,000 feet. At 1108 hours from 19,700 feet an airfield was observed with 42 aircraft, believed to be heavy bombers or transports.

CASUALTIES: Minor flak damage to two aircraft.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis Kingsman Ward Hart

03/19/44. Made another double-header today. Made my 26th today. Bombed Graz, Germany. Ball (turret) gunner (Shorty Stansell) got a ME-109. **MY MISSION NO. 25 AND 26.** *”Our primary target was Graz, Austria Airdrome, but undercast prevented us from bombing it, so the secondary target was Graz..... We headed over the target and got a lot of flack, then the fighters hit us. We (the 722nd) were leading the low left, second attack unit (and) we had a straggler in our unit. We held back some. We all fired some at the (enemy) fighters Shorty claimed one. We went over (after the mission) to put in for (Shorty's kill) but we could not find anyone, (to report it to) got pissed off and never

went back. We had a big hole in the elevator, but did not know where it came from.... fighters or our own waist guns. It must have come from fighters.” (Most likely fighters, as all guns, both turret and waist guns, had “fire interrupters” that prevented gunners from “killing” their own planes.)

03/19/44. GROUP MISSION NO. 37. Target; Steyr (Graz), Austria - Walzergenswerk Ball Bearing Plant.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-seven B-24's took off at 1000 hours to bomb Steyr Walzergenswerk ball bearing plant. One returned early. Thirty-five dropped 105 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on secondary target, City of Graz, Austria at 1405 hours from 21,000 feet. One aircraft missing. Three early returns brought back all bombs.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 98th Bomb Group at 1050 hours over Manduria at 3000 feet and with the 376th and 451st Bomb Groups over San Vito D' Normanni at 1057 hours at 3000 feet. Proceeded on course to Bos Novi thence enroute to Steyr. However, turn back was made due to 10/10 cloud cover over the entire area. The secondary target, City of Graz, showed through the clouds and the bombs were dropped on the south side of the city. Rally was right and course resumed to Vieste thence to base.

RESULTS: In as much as the cloud cover cleared only momentarily, the lead bombardier had to make a short run and a factory area in the south center of town was selected as the aiming point and strings of bombs were laid across the south side of the town. Photos showed 5 hits on barracks 2500 feet southwest a railroad bridge. Two hits on small store buildings and some hits on barracks south of the railroad bridge on East Side of river. 8/10 cloud coverage over the target area prevented either complete photo coverage or accurate observations. Only a small percentage of the bombs dropped were photographed.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; While still seven minutes from the secondary target and flying in cruising formation, between 10 to 15 enemy aircraft consisting of ME-109's and FW-190's attacked the group that was the lead group of the two groups. The attack started with the first of the enemy aircraft seen coming in from the north and lasted, with some slight pauses, for forty minutes. The majority of the attacks occurred between 1410 and 1420 hours and in all instances from the rear both high and low. The most aggressive attacks came from a flight of 6 ME-109's flown by experienced pilots who attacked in elements of two abreast breaking off on right side after firing cannon and then reforming high above and to the rear of our formation. The majority of the attacks were made at 21,000 feet and there was no evidence that any rockets were carried or that belly tanks were used. No damage by either cannon or machine gun fire was reported. From the lack of aggressiveness displayed it was evident that the enemy aircraft were trailing our formation waiting for stragglers damaged by flak. There were no special identifying marking seen on any of the attacking aircraft. **Flak;** Over the target this group experienced intense, accurate, heavy flak of both barrage and predicted variety, holing 16 of our aircraft. Enroute slight, inaccurate, light flak was encountered at Trieste and intense, accurate, heavy flak was encountered at

Flugmotorenwere - Graz, Austria, by one light gun and six heavy guns.

OBSERVATIONS: One B-24 seen to lose altitude at 1400 hours from 21,500 feet. All engines appeared to be working but aircraft disappeared in lower cloud strata and was not seen again. Activity apparent and 200 cars in marshaling yard at Trieste noted at 1445 hours from 17,000 feet. 75 to 100 cars in marshaling yard at Fiume at 1440 hours from 18,000 feet. One destroyer, 1 transport, 4 barges and 10 smaller ships in Harbor at Trieste at 1445 hours, seen from 18,000 feet. Six to eight merchant vessels in Harbor at Pirano at 1447 hours, seen from 16,000 feet.

CASUALTIES: One bomber missing. Reason unknown. Sixteen bombers received minor flack damage and one crewmember was slightly wounded.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed:	Probable	Damaged
1 FW-190	1 ME-109	0
5 ME-109's		

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon	Lehman	Dawkins	Gross
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03/20/44. No mission today. We got ready for one, (to Bulgaria but due to weather) it was called off. I was about ready for a day of rest anyway.

03/21/44. No news today. There was no mission, so I went out and cleaned my gun. This afternoon, it rained again.

03/22/44. It didn't rain any today but it was cloudy so we didn't fly. Went to the show this afternoon. (A mission was scheduled and we were briefed and on stand-by all morning.)

03/23/44. Nothing today. No mission again. More rain. I guess it's never going to quit. We are still scheduled for a mission. *” I got up early and we took off on a mission, but it was so cloudy we just could not find an opening, so after circling for two hours they called us in.”

3/24/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 38. Target; Steyr, Austria - Walzergenswerk Ball Bearing Plant.

NOTE: The following quoted from the War Diary of the 721st Bomb Squadron.

“A catastrophe occurred while the formation was flying over the Adriatic Sea. Lts. Hartman and Whalen collided in mid-air and crashed head-on into the sea. No chutes were seen and it is believed that all on board perished. Lt. Hartman, incidentally, just received a telegram a few days ago stating that he was the proud father of a 7-pound baby boy. The ships were: ‘Deuces Wild,’ flown by Lt. Hartman; and ‘Yankee Fury,’ flown by

Lt. Whalen. Lt. Whalen was a new replacement flying his first mission. (From S-2 Narratives, Book One.)

03/24/44. Lost three ships today. We started on it but made an ER. One of the boys (Lanier) took the cramps and we had to bring him in. *” The Wing was called back but Major Snaith was leading our group so he did not turn back with the rest of the group, and the second attack unit. He got the group shot up that was with him. Anderson, Stripp and Captain Bullis went down.”

03/25/44. I guess we will have to get up every morning for a mission whether we make one or not. Today’s (mission) was called off. Bad weather again.

03/26/44. Same story today with our old stand-by, Steyr, Austria, as the target. It is raining cats and dogs and we go to the plane (in the rain) before it is called off.

03/27/44. They’re slipping. Not even a mission scheduled for today. We didn’t know it though, til this morning. Sweat it all night.

03/28/44. Made one today. My 27th After three take-offs, we finally made it. Had to land for gas leaks. (We) bombed with the 449th Couldn’t catch up with the 450th Mission was to M/Y near Venice. Mestre, Italy. **MY MISSION NO. 27.**

03/28/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 39. Target; Mestre, Italy - Marshaling Yard

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-four B-24’s took off at 0845 hours with two E/R’s. Thirty dropped 74.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs at 1234 hours from 19,500 - 20,000 feet. Two jettisoned 3 tons of bombs in the Adriatic Sea. One because of engine trouble and one due to failure to defective fuse. Thirty-one returned to base at 1450 hours. One landed at friendly field. None lost.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 98th Bomb Group at 0930 hours over Manduria at 3000 feet. On course, the second wave comprising of the 376th Bomb Group and the third wave comprising of the 449th and 451st Bomb Groups were picked up over Castuni at 3000 feet. The Wing then proceeded on course to I. P. (Piove-Di-Sacco) and made a run on target, attacking on an axis of 30 degrees. Railroad right, continued on course to base. Target was given as 1210 hours but due to heavy head winds enroute to target, 24 minutes were lost and target was attacked at 1234 hours.

RESULTS: That portion of the target assigned to this group was squarely hit with concentration of bombs across the aiming point. Photo coverage indicates the following Wing damage: Several direct hits on chemical plant, direct hits on warehouses and storage buildings, direct hits on train’s shipment sheds, a concentration of hits on industrial plant, concentration of hits on buildings. A large fire was seen in the center of the aiming point indicating the destruction of oil and gasoline cars, and the entire area was covered with smoke as the formation turned away after the bomb run.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; While still eighteen minutes from the target and

flying in cruising formation, six ME-109's were sighted flying several thousand feet higher and who maintained a course from 10 O'clock toward the formation. They dived down and passed under without making any attacks but remained in sight until the target was reached. The wings and fuselages were painted a mottled brown and they had red noses. After the formation cleared the target no other enemy aircraft were sighted. None of our aircraft's reported attacks. **Flak:** Over the target this group experienced slight, inaccurate, heavy flak, but the intensity was so slight it could not be determined whether or not it was of the predicted or barrage type. None of our aircraft were holed. Slight, inaccurate, heavy flak was encountered over Venice, but without damage.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1208 hours from 19,000 feet a B-24 left the formation; At 1226 hours a tan B-24 is believed to have ditched; At 1235 hours from 20,000 feet, one ME-109 towing some large object that did not flutter as a tow target would, was seen. It was flying about 5,000 feet below the formation and the object that was attached might have been a bomb hung on a cable. It was so far away that the observers could not distinguish exactly what it was. At 1208 hours from 19,000 feet, 100 freight cars were seen in marshaling yard at Cavarzere. At 1235 hours from 19,500 feet, one cruiser, five large merchant vessels, ten small boats and two sea-planes were seen in Venice Harbor evidenced much activity.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450th CO) Carr Courtright Coates

03/29/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 40. Target; Bolzano, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

03/29/44. Got off today again. Our plane flew (a mission) though, I went to town and got some stamps. Engine change on Toni Gayle.

03/30/44. Went to Sofia, Bulgaria, M/Y. A beautiful job, too. No trouble at all. Flew (the mission in) Booby Trap. Also, got the Air Medal on return to the base. **MY MISSION NO. 28.** “*...we had three wings over the target and hit moderate flack.”

<GROUP MISSION NO. 41. Target; Sofia, Bulgaria - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-two B-24's took off at 0722 hours to bomb Sofia Marshaling Yard an Industrial Area. Three returned early. Thirty-eight dropped 113.75 tons of G. P. bombs at 0959 hours from 19,000 - 21,500 feet. One bomber had a huge bomb (.25 tons) in the rack that was jettisoned in Adriatic Sea. Two of the early returns brought back 6 tons of bombs to base while one jettisoned 3 tons of bombs over Albania. Thirty-eight returned to base at 1240 hours. One bomber missing.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 98th Bomb Group over Manduria at 0823 hours at 8000 feet with the rest of the Wing on the Rendezvous line San Pancrazio to San Veto Di Normanni. Proceeded on course to I. P., but turn was made inside the I. P.

(Slivnitsa) and the target was attacked on an axis of 60 degrees, rallied right and proceeded to five miles north of Skopolje, to Monopoli, to base.

RESULTS: There were strings of bombs across the choke point at the end of the M/Y and several hits on buildings adjacent to M/Y. Photo coverage showed approximately 180 bombs fell in south and southeast part of the city, and that there were scattered strings of bombs in the area of the target. There were also hits on installations. Smoke from previous bomb bursts prevented the accurate observation of bomb damage.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; While still nineteen minutes from the target and flying cruising formation, one enemy aircraft was spotted about two miles ahead of the formation just under the tops of clouds. It did not attack and no others were seen until the target was reached. There the encounters reached the height of their intensity with seven recorded attacks on our aircraft. They were made with thirteen ships: 11 ME-109's and two FW-190's. Attacks were not coordinated but were made singly from between 4 and 6 O'clock low, In general the tactics were to close within 300 - 400 yards and break away in a diving turn. There was only one real aggressive attack made by a FW-190 who closed to within 200 yards and was shot down. All attacks were broken off in this area 1006 hours. The next enemy aircraft to be seen were over the Skopolje area where seven ME-109's were sighted coming from the rear and who broke formation to make individual passes at the rear of our formation. These attacks could scarcely be called encounters as they were wide swings at about 800 yards from 4 to 6 O'clock level. Two of the ME-109's were painted yellow and green on the underside with a yellow band extending back from the cockpit. Others had yellow wing tips and silver wings and fuselages. One FW-190 had a yellow and black checkered nose. Our claims are as follows: 1 FW-190 destroyed and two ME-109's probably destroyed. **Flak:** Over the target was moderate, fairly accurate heavy of the barrage type and installations seem to fringe the entire city. Over Skopolje it was slight, fairly accurate, heavy. Five of our aircraft were holed.

OBSERVATIONS: One B-24 dropped from formation at 0849 hours at 10,500 feet. At Sofia/Vrojdebna Airdrome at 1000 hours from 20,000 feet, two transports, six single engine fighters and 8 to 10 twin engine fighters or bombers were seen. At 1045 hours from 14,000 feet, a light concentration of cars were seen in marshaling yard at Skoplje. At 1015 from 20,000 feet, a train of 35 cars under steam heading west was seen.

CASUALTIES: One bomber reported missing, reason unknown. Five of our bombers received slight flack damage. One crewmember was slightly wounded.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed; 1 FW-190. **Probable;** 2 ME-109's. **Damaged;** 0

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Orris (722nd CO) Lehman Kellman Bailen

03/31/44. Pay day and no mission. It was raining anyway. We fly tomorrow though.

Hope it's an easy one. *'' (I painted the bombs on the plane up to date.)''

04/01/44. No mission today. We were scheduled for one but they called it off on account of bad weather.

04/02/44. Made the old stand by today. Went to Steyr, Austria. I knew I'd have to make it. Saw lots of (enemy) fighters again. No losses. (**#221, Toni Gayle, claimed a JU-88 shot down. See NOTE No. 11 at end of the following S-2 Narrative Report.**) **MY MISSION NO. 29 AND 30.** *'' I was awakened in the middle of the night for a mission. We took off for Steyr, Austria, and we really had a hot day of it. We were attacked four times by 109's, 110, 210, and JU-88's.'' (This may have been the mission that Goering's crack fighter pilots split right through the middle of our Group and Wing, trying to rattle us and break up the formation. I was on the left waist gun this day but usually manned the right gun, and one ME-109 got so close to us that I could almost see the whites of his eyes. These were Goering's elite squadrons had special identifying markings. The 109's were white and the FW-190's yellow markings. As this was an early morning mission this or the following mission on 04/03/44 to Budapest, Hungary may have been the one that a picture appeared in the June 16, 1944 issue by Yank Army Weekly of what appears to be the Manduria Base Mess hall line. Both were early morning take-offs. If so, I am second in the mess line. I recall an early morning mission in which I kept seeing flash bulbs going off but gave it no thought at the time. These pictures would have been taken well in advance of the issue date of the publication. A copy is elsewhere in this missive.)

04/02/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 42. Target; Steyr, Austria - Daimler-Puch Factory.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-one B-24's took off at 0730 hours with three E/R's. Thirty-two dropped 95.75 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs at 1234 hours from 21,000 - 24,000 feet. One jettisoned 3 tons of bombs due to bomb release malfunction. One jettisoned 15 miles below I.P. as aircraft was damaged by enemy fighters while one jettisoned 25 tons in Adriatic and two returned 5.5 tons to base. Thirty-four returned to base at 1504 hours. Two missing. One at friendly air field. One landed at Island of Vis.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 376th Bomb Group at 0809 hours over San Pancrazio at 3000 feet and with the rest of the Wing, on course to San Veto D' Normanni; with escort at 1045 hours over Jugoslavia. Continued on course to I. P. where; left turn was made on to target, which was attacked, on an axis of 325 degrees. Rallied left and continued on course to turning point Valkermarkt to base.

RESULTS: As our formation approached the target, it was found to be entirely covered with heavy smoke and bombs were dropped as close to aiming point as possible under the circumstances. It is believed that a good coverage resulted. Photo coverage showed the target area so smoke concealed that damage assessment could not be made.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Shortly after the formation passed into Jugoslavia, two JU-88's flying in line abreast, intercepted and fell into the rear about 4,000 feet

where they stayed until the target was reached. Neither attacked nor broke their formation. In general, they were about 2000 feet higher than our high right. It is to be assumed that they were acting as radio contacts and could, when the actual fighter interception took place, have acted to direct the assault. They were not seen after the turn back from target. While still an hour from the target and flying in normal cruising formation, the second attack unit of our Group was jumped by 30 to 40 ME-109's and six of our aircraft suffered individual attacks, which continued from 10 to 15 minutes. In general, The tactics were to attack in line astern at 5, 6, 7, and 9 O'clock, closing to 300 yards and to break off in a diving turn. One flight of ME-109's, rocket equipped, flying two abreast, closed to within 100 yards before breaking off on either side. They would fire rockets from 400 yards and close using machine guns. The majority of attacks could not be called aggressive, but the pilots did not seem to lack experience. Encounters resumed at 1200 hours by ME-109's, ME-110's, FW 190's and MA-202's. The ME-109's carried belly tanks that were jettisoned from 2000 yards before attacking. All engagements were broken off just before the target was reached and not again resumed. As in the first attacks, the enemy aircraft made passes mostly from 6 O'clock low and level, breaking off between 200 and 300 yards. If anything, the attacks were less aggressive than those of the first engagements were and it was evident that they were waiting for stragglers. The ME-109's not equipped with rockets were armed with 20 mm cannon and these shells were constantly lobbed at the formation. ME-109's were painted green and yellow. JU-88's were painted a mottled brown. Our claims during this entire engagement are as follows: 5 ME-109's destroyed. two probably destroyed and 1 JU-88 destroyed. Majority of the attacks took place at 21,000 feet. **Flak:** Our aircraft carried the metallized paper used to confuse radar and this was dropped from the I. P. to the target. Its effect was evident as the flak at the target was reported as intense, inaccurate, heavy. Most of the bursts low and those, which reached the proper altitudes, were inaccurate for deflection. Toward the end of the A. A. firing, one peculiar burst was noted about 1500 feet over the formation that closely resembled a plane exploding as it gave out a quantity of black smoke through which a brilliant orange flash could be seen with a black streamer that floated to the ground. It seemed to be a signal to cease firing as few bursts thereafter could be noted. Intense, accurate, heavy flak was experienced at Graz. Hieflau, moderate, inaccurate, heavy flak, at Autenmarkt, moderate, accurate, heavy flack and at Bruck, moderate, good, heavy flak. In all 12 of our aircraft were holed.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1133 hours from 10,000 feet, one B-24 was seen attacked by fighters and shot down - 3 chutes out but only two observed to opened. At 1235 hours from 21,500 feet, two B-24's were seen to collide over the target - 2 chutes seen to open. At 1136 hours from 19,000 feet, one B-24 was attacked by fighters north of Klagenfurt - 5 chutes opened. At 1220 hours from 20,000 feet over Graz, two B-24's observed to go down in flames - no chutes. At 1230 hours from 21,500 feet, one B-24 seen in flames 10 miles south of Steyr, 5 to 6 chutes seen to open. At 1246 hours from 21,000 feet, one B-24 left formation with engine out. It is believed that smoke pots were used around the target area, but the smoke was so heavy when our group went over in its position at the tail of the formation, that this could not be verified.

CASUALTIES: Two aircraft missing, reason unknown. Twelve aircraft received flack

damage, not serious. Three aircraft were damaged in fighter attacks, none serious. Six crewmembers were slightly wounded from flack and five slightly wounded from fighter attacks.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed;	probable;	damaged;
5 ME109's	2 ME-109's	0
1 JU-88		

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis	Kingsman	Word	Lehman
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NOTE: The following is a detailed account of the enemy fighter attacks on our Group:

1. 4 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #164 from 12 O'clock and broke away at 3 O'clock.
2 ME - 109's attacked at 3 O'clock high and broke away at 3 O'clock.
2. 10 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #338 high and low. 13 - ME-109's came in high at 5 O'clock, dove under and came up on other side. 8 - ME-109's attacked planes, 3 came in high at 6 O'clock - 21 ME-109's and FW-190's shot rockets at formation then attacked from sun. Gunner claims one probable ME-109
3. 1 - ME-109 attacked aircraft #432 low at 9 O'clock and as he reached our waist, turned belly to us.
4. 10 - ME-109's attacked aircraft # 124 from 6 to 9 O'clock. Gunner claims 4 of these aircraft destroyed.
5. 3 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #267 at 6 O'clock. Gunner claim one of these enemy aircraft destroyed.
6. 6 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #252 at 6 O'clock.
7. 6 - ME-109's and FW-190's attacked aircraft #339 in line from 6 O'clock shot rockets and came within 100 yards. Gunner claims 3 ME-109's destroyed.
8. 6 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #122 6 to 7 O'clock high, also from 2 O'clock to 5 O'clock high.
9. 4 - ME-109's made tail attacks on aircraft 141 from 5 O'clock and 7 O'clock.
10. 2 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #611 at front and rear. Gunner claims 1 ME-109 damaged.
11. 4 - JU-88's and 9 ME-109's attacked aircraft #221(Toni Gayle) Gunner claims 1 JU-88 destroyed.

12. 10 - ME-109's attacked aircraft #085 faked passes, then 3 planes at a time attacked from 6 O'clock low.
13. Aircraft #141: FW-190 attacked in 2's from all directions.
14. Plane #227: 8 ME-109's attacked from all angles. Some of them attacked level.
15. Plane #338: 5 ME-109's attacked low at 3 O'clock. Very aggressive a target.
16. Plane #445: 11 ME-109's and FW-190's attacked from 3 and 9 O'clock, passed underneath. 4 JU-88's stayed in back to attack from high; from 5 to 7 O'clock.
17. Plane #189: 3 ME-109's flew alongside of plane about 1200 yards then peeled off for attack at 3 O'clock.
18. Plane #119: 1 JU-88 attacked from 6 O'clock high. Came in at about 600 yards.
19. Plane #432: ME-109 made 3 passes.
20. Plane #096: 5 FW-190's stood off and then made passes from rear.
21. Plane #760: 7 FW-190's made single passes from all around the clock.
22. Plane #579: 2 FW-190's attacked: 2 ME-109's attacked from tail.
23. Plane #582: Attacked from 6 O'clock levels by 1 JU-88. JU-88 claimed destroyed.

04/03/44. Went to Budapest, Hungary today. It was rough but not half as bad as I figured. My 32nd mission and it counted double. (This may have been the mission that I recall flash bulbs were going off and pictures being taken when I was in the mess line at our new mess hall for an early morning {0630 take-off} mission. Later, in the June 16, 1944, issue of **YANK Army Weekly**, appeared a picture which I believe is of the kitchen mess line. If so, the second in the chow line is I. A copy is elsewhere in the Toni Gayle Story. Obviously no dates or locations are given but the cover indicates pictures' pages 2 through 9 are of the **15th AIR FORCE Air Bases**. These pictures are on page 5 and the time frame would fit as it may well have taken over two months from the time these pictures were taken and the magazine published and distributed to the PX for sale. **MISSION NO 31 AND 32.**

04/03/44 <GROUP MISSION NO. 43. Target; Budapest, Hungary - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-seven B-24's took off at 0630 hours, two returned early. Thirty-five 104.75 tons of 500 lb. G.P. bombs on target at 1133 hours from 20,000 - 22,000 feet. One Jettisoned 3 tons of bombs near the target after engine failure reduced

speed and one jettisoned bombs in Adriatic after they hung when bombs were released over target. Of the two E/R's one jettisoned 3 tons of bombs in Adriatic and one returned to base. Thirty-four returned to base at 1352 hours. One returned to base at 1840 hours having stopped at a friendly field to refuel. None lost. None at friendly fields.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 98th Bomb Group at 0750 hours over Manduria at 6000 feet and with other Wing Groups at 6000 feet on Rendezvous line Manduria to San Vito D' Normanni; with escort (P47's) at 0940 hours. Continued on course to I. P. (Manor) where left turn was made and target attacked on an axis of 330 degrees. Rally left and course continued to Rally point (Poks) to Tuzla to base.

RESULTS: As the target was approached it was seen that smoke screens had been started and that the target area was 6/10 obscured. The "Y" at the northeast end of the marshaling yard was still visible and bombardiers were able to use it for target identification purposes. Visual assessment of damages was virtually impossible as the smoke screen thickened but crewmembers were almost unanimous in declaring the target well hit. Photo coverage showed 90 bursts in M/Y with 10 on south Choke point. The greatest concentration appeared to be in center of the yard. A great explosion and fire was caused by 10 hits on adjacent oil refinery and a large fire was started in a factory building. Also hits were seen on warehouse area east of M/Y and store type buildings.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; While 34 minutes from the target and in cruising formation a flight of between 15 and 20 M-E-109's were seen from an altitude of 22,500 feet flying almost 2,000 feet higher and to the right. Some were black and some were yellow but they were not close enough for distinctive markings to be seen. No attacks were made. Trailing slightly were two JU-88's at a higher level that seemed to be directing the flight. actual attacks were not started until 1110 hours when 5 FW-190's approached from the rear, but stayed back and fired 20-mm cannon without closing. The attacks increased in intensity up to the target where all action was broken off but rejoined as our formation rallied. Attacks were made singly and in pairs - one flight seemed coordinated as 11 to 12 ME-109's and FW-190's joined at 3 and 9 O'clock diving underneath while 4 JU-88's stood to rear to close immediately after at 5 to 7 O'clock high firing rockets and breaking off at 100 yards on either side. All attacks took place between 20,000 and 21,500 feet. The great majority of attacks were not pressed home with great aggressiveness. Our claims during this during this engagement were as follows: Destroyed: FW-190's, two JU-88's. Probable: 1 ME-109. Damaged: 1 ME-210. Markings: ME-109, silver wings and fuselages, black wings and fuselages and mottled brown fuselages with yellow wing tips; FW-190, brown with white tails; JU-88 all black. Two FW-190's were observed with round orange circles on fuselage near waist, yellow noses and white vertical stabilizer. **Flak:** Over the target was intense, accurate, heavy, of the predicted variety holing 16 of our aircraft, none seriously. The bursts over the area were of the black and white kind with black puffs predominating. There were no flak signals for enemy aircraft to break off encounters noted. Enroute at Sarajevo, slight, good, heavy flak was encountered while at Szekesfehervar it was moderate, good, heavy. At Dubrovnik the flak was slight, poor and heavy.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1335 hours from 6000 feet, a B-24 was seen flying low over Adriatic, possibly preparing to ditch. At 1000 hours from 18,000 feet, 12 unidentified aircraft were seen at Petrovgrad Airdrome. At Budapest/Csepel Airdrome, twenty single and twin-engine aircraft were (seen) parked in front of hangars. At 1118 hours from 20,700 feet, 60 to 70 aircraft on camouflaged field (were seen) at Budapest/Matyasfold Airdrome. Type not discernible.

CASUALTIES: Sixteen aircraft received minor flack damage. One aircraft received minor damage from fighter attack. Two crewmembers seriously wounded and two were slightly wounded.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
3 FW-190's	1 ME-109	1 ME-210
2 JU-88's		

FLIGHT LEADERS

Gideon	Hagenson	Wolcott	Leebody	Courtright	Coates
Beth	Lehman	Bruner	Tipton	Edwards	Amster

04/04/44. Hitting all the Capitols, seems like. We went to Bucherest, Romania. Another double mission. Wasn't too rough though. **MY MISSION NO. 33 AND 34.**

04/04/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 44. Target; Bucherest, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-one B-24's took off at 1010 hours to bomb Bucherest Marshaling Yard. Three returned early. Thirty-four dropped 101 tons of 500 lb G.P. bombs on target at 1406 hours from 19,500 - 23,000 feet. Six planes jettisoned due to sundry mechanical malfunctions. Thirty-eight returned to base at 1655 to 730 hours. None lost. None at other bases.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvous was made with the 98th Bomb Group over Manduria at 1059 hours on course to San Vito DI Normanni. Rendezvous was competed with the other groups comprising the attack Wing. Then to Yugoslav Coast to I. P. then over target on 120 degrees heading. Rally was right and then direct home.

RESULTS: Attack was made on a direct course down the railroad tracks from the NW. Our aiming point was covered by a concentration of hits. Many other strikes were seen as per photo coverage assessment with the following as important points. Direct hit on choke point leading north to Pilots. 36 direct hits on choke point with at least four strikes on the Prahova Oil Refinery, a large fire resulting. 24 hits on choke point SE of locomotive sheds. 24 strikes on sidings and industrial area. Many hits on industrial buildings. About 24 hits seen on warehouses and stores' buildings 3500 feet NW of roundhouse in NW marshaling yard.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; All encounters occurred in the target area. Moderately aggressive attacks were made from 6 O'clock level principally by ME-109's and FW-190's, singly and in pairs; a few JU-88's and ME-109's stood off out of our range and fired rockets and explosive shells. In all, 10 to 15 ME-109's and FW-190's plus 5 MA-202's, 10 JU-88's, 4 AR-8's and 1 ME-110 were seen. Our claims are: Destroyed: One ME-109 and one FW-190. Probably destroyed: 1 FW-190 plus 2 ME-109's. Damaged: 1 ME-109. Markings: FW-190's had some yellow spinners and wing tips. Yellow number 15 was seen on one of these. ME-109's were black-gray with yellow spots. A JU-99 was observed with a yellow nose. One ME-109 had a silver nose with yellow fuselage, while another had a yellow nose and black belly. **Flak:** Over the target, flak was slight to moderate, inaccurate, heavy type. At Nis, moderate, inaccurate, heavy type was encountered. From Skopolje intense, inaccurate, heavy type came up. Four of our aircraft received minor damage from flak bursts. In general, it was believed that the enemy flak gunners in the target area were inexperienced and that if radar aiming was used, it was upset by "windo." (Aluminum foil strips that we would throw out the waist windows. I threw out many a carton of them.)

OBSERVATIONS: Smoke screen around marshaling yard at target and near Ploesti, not too effective. At 1335 hours from 15,000 feet, 22 barges seen in harbor at Lom. Much traffic in Danube. At 1455 hours, from 11,500 feet, 25 river barges seen at Calafat. At 1338 hours from 15,000 feet, 12 barges seen near Orekhovo. At 1340 hours from 16,000 feet near Caracal, 150 oil cars seen in yard. At 1459 hours from 13,000 feet military installations seen on East Side of river. At 1406 hours from 21,000 feet at Bucherest/Cotrocene Airdrome 12 aircraft seen, 3 to 5 of them bombers.

CASUALTIES: None. Four of our aircraft received minor damage from fighters. Two crewmembers were slightly wounded.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed	Probable	Damaged
1 ME-109	2 ME-109's	1 ME-109
1 FW-190	1 FW-190	

FLIGHT LEADERS

Snaith	Kaecker	Ley	Teed	Word	Gottfried
Scott	Poggi	Courtright	Coates	Hervey	Gottlieb

04/05/44 <GROUP MISSION NO. 45. Target; Ploesti, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

04/05/44. All of us (the crew) got a day of rest today but Shorty. They (his flight) bombed Ploesti Oil fields. Lots of flak and enemy fighters, he said. (According to Bill Fili's book this mission was led by the 450th {Forty bombers from the 450th with six E/R's} with two hundred thirty bombers making it to the target. Thirteen bombers were shot down, ten B-24's, with five of these being from the leading 450th and three B-17's. Eleven were downed by enemy fighters and only two brought down by flak.) *"... while I was at operations checking for mail I heard a big crash. We all went down to see

a 451st plane that had blown up killing and burning all the crewmembers except one. That concussion had thrown him out and he ran away before it burned, but he still got burned some. in the afternoon I went out and cleaned my guns while the plane was on a hop. Our new mess hall opened with a party, yet I did not attend as I wrote a lot of letters.

04/06/44. The group, as a whole, got off today. I didn't do a thing the whole day but eat and sleep.

04/07/44. Another mission today. We bombed a M/Y in Northern Italy close to the Adriatic. “*We flew a mission to the Venice area (Mastre M/Y). We hit some flack and the P-38 escort had a few challenges by fighters yet they never got to us. **MY MISSION NO. 35.**

04/07/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 46: Target; Mastre, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-five B-24's took off at 1003 hours. Twenty-eight dropped 80.75 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1311 hours from 20,000 - 23,000 feet. Two others jettisoned 3.25 tons and another jettisoned ..25 tons in Adriatic, all due to malfunction of equipment. One missing. Twenty-eight returned to base at 1533 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: 450th rendezvoused with the 98th Bomb Group over Manduria at 1018 hours, with the 98th leading, and proceeding on course to San Vito D' Normanni where Wing rendezvous was completed. Hence to key point, to turn point, to I. P. Choggi, and then over target on a 330 degree heading. Rally was left out to sea and then straight course to home.

RESULTS: In general the target area was very well covered. A heavy smoke cover appeared above our aiming point but it is believed to be thoroughly covered, particularly slightly to the north. According to photo coverage our Group placed a very heavy concentration of bombs across the railroad station and adjoining yard areas. Several direct hits are seen on warehouse, starting fires. Destructive bursts hit the industrial plant. A number of strikes are seen 3000 feet north of the chemical plant.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; 5 to 6 ME-109's were seen only momentarily at some distance. A brief distant glimpse of a second formation of 6 ME-109's disclosed them carrying silver tails, black wings and bodies. There were no encounters. **Flak:** Over the target area our Group encountered slight, inaccurate, heavy type flack. A marked decrease from our previous mission.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1300 hours, from 22,000 feet, a B-24 with left outboard engine smoking heavily and possibly on fire was seen losing altitude and making a right turn. At 1306 hours from 22,000 feet, a B-24 went spiraling down in wide turns.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Orris (722nd CO) Gottfried John Gladstone Kellman Bailen

Word Gross Pitt McGinnity Conkilin Buksa

04/08/44. Was supposed to go on a mission today but they (the ground crew) had to change an engine on the plane. The rest came back anyway. Bad weather. *”the third one on No. 2 engine.”

04/09/44. No mission today. We had one scheduled but it was called off. Went to Easter Service today. It was held in the open. *”I got up to fly and had briefing, then the mission was called off.....In the afternoon Lowrance, Shorty and I went to Oria to the museum. We walked a lot of the way up there. It was a lovely day and we had a good day..... but very lonely.”

04/10/44. Still no mission. There wasn't even one scheduled. The 15th Air Force ordered that all planes be grounded for five days, so I hear.

04/11/44. No mission today again either. Weather is a little bad, I guess. Nothing new has happened, otherwise.

04/12/44. Made a mission today for a change. Went to Weiner-Newstadt, Austria. Counted as two missions. **MY MISSION NO. 36 AND 37.** *”We went over the target at about 26,000 feet). Had heavy, inaccurate flack. We got a big hole in the wing. I made out OK on the mission. We had the best fighter cover we ever had. (P-38's, P-47's and P-51's) They really covered us good. (26,500 feet was about the maximum altitude that a B-24 could fly when fully loaded with bombs. The highest altitude we ever flew that I can recall was 26,500 feet, just over five miles.)

04/12/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 47. Target; Weiner Neustadt, Austria - Aircraft Assembly Plant.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-one B-24's took off at 0811 hours to bomb factory buildings of the Weiner Neustadt aircraft Assembly Plant. Three returned early. Thirty-four dropped 66.50 tons of 100 lb. G. P bombs on target at 1205 hours from 23,000 - 26,500 feet. Six jettisoned bombs of which two jettisoned at I. P. (Sopron) because of engine trouble while the others jettisoned the remainder in the Adriatic because of malfunction of bomb release mechanism. Two returned bombs to base. Thirty-seven returned to base at 1435 hours. One missing. None at friendly fields.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group over Manduria at 0600 hours at 6000 feet at 0900 hours and with the other Wing Groups along the rendezvous line Manduria - San Vito D' Normanni at 6000 feet at 0907 hours. Proceeded on course to Mostar then to I. P. Sopron where left turn was made onto target which was attacked on axis of 300 degrees. Rallied left and proceeded to base. This Group followed the lead Group in its navigation to and from the target.

RESULTS: The target area was heavily hit and a concentration of bombs was noted on railroad and highway overpass south of target area. Photo coverage showed the heaviest concentration on the south two thirds of target and extending across highway and

railroad. A large workshop received many hits and direct bomb strikes were noted on the Henschel and Sohh Factory. There were many bursts with heavy concentration on north side of airdrome extending west across highway and railroad. The north half of target area was smoke obscured when the group reached the target and both visual and photo observation was impossible. However, it is believed that this area was also well covered.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; The first contact with enemy fighters was made when 4 ME-109's were sighted flying in from the northeast. They stayed well out of distance and left shortly thereafter. The second and only other contact came between the I. P. Sopron and the target when 4 FW-190's and 1 JU-88 were seen. They stayed off several miles and did not at any time offer to attack. No enemy aircraft were seen on the route home. **Flak:** Over the target this Group experienced intense, excellent flak which tracked the formation with surprising accuracy. No "windo" was used and the radar aiming devices worked with speed and precision. The bursts were both black and white in approximately equal proportion. Over Mostar the flak was inaccurate to intense, excellent, heavy and of the predicted variety and the bursts were observed to be all black. In all fourteen of our aircraft were holed of which five were seriously damaged.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1210 hours from 23,000 feet, 1 ME-109 seen shot down by a P-38. At 1016 hours from 17,000 feet, 4 ME-109's seen on airdrome at Mostar along with 5 single engine fighters. At 1205 hours from 25,000 feet many aircraft were seen on Weiner Neustadt Airdrome.

CASUALTIES: The Waist Gunner on #119 and Ball Turret Gunner on #758 were seriously wounded. Two other crewmembers were slightly wounded. 14 aircraft received flack damage, five severe and 9 minor.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis	Kingman	Scott	Poggi	Courtright	Coates
Dawkins	Cross	Caywood	Stricklin		

NOTE: The following quoted from the War Diary of the 721st Bomb Squadron.

"Major Davis and his crew surely did experience much anxiety and danger on this mission. Four clusters of bombs hung in the bomb racks when they were released and the aiming wires on them were broken. The Bombardier, Lt. Kingsman, and the Navigator, Lt. Bartholmy climbed in the bomb bay and disarmed the bombs while the ship was in flight. The bomb's vane had come out and only a slight jar would have set off the bomb. The ship returned to the base and they were instructed by radio from the ground by the Armament Officer how to take the fuse out of that particular bomb. After quite a length of time, this was accomplished, and then the bombs were jettisoned in the Adriatic. Normally, under such extreme danger, the crew would be likely to bail out, but owing to one of the crew members, S/Sgt. Fren, who was badly wounded in the leg by flack, the entire crew chose to see the whole thing through. This was a fine example of courage and ability."

04/13/44. Another double mission today. Went to Budapest again, but this time we hit the airfield. **MY MISSION NO. 38 AND 39.** *” We carried frag bombs. We had some flak and fighters, but our P-47 escort took care of them. P-38’s were escorting some of the other groups over the target also. We saw a plane get a direct hit, go down in a spin, on fire and was breaking up in mid-air.”

04/13/44. GROUP MISSION NO. 48. Target; Budapest, Hungary - Vesces Airdrome.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-seven B-24’s took off at 0900 hours. Two returned early. Thirty-two dropped 38.4 tons of 20#A and M#41 bombs on target at 1234 hours from 20,000 - 22,000 feet. Of the three that jettisoned 3.6 tons, one jettisoned due to malfunction of bomb bay doors, one jettisoned because the bombs hung up over the target and one jettisoned due to electrical system failure. The two early returns jettisoned in the Adriatic. Thirty-five returned to base at 1510 hours.

ROUTE AND RESULTS: Rendezvoused with the 449th Group over Manduria at 0953 hours at 6000 feet and with the other Wing Groups along the rendezvous line Manduria - San Vito D’ Normanni at 100 hours at 6000 feet; with escort at 1200 hours who withdrew at 1300 hours. Continued on course until I. P. (Kunszentmiklas) was reached, then made run on target attacking on an axis of 14 degrees. Rallied right, proceeded to rally point and then to base.

RESULTS: The greatest concentration of hits were on the right of the aiming point and in the southeast dispersal area. Some hits were seen in the east dispersal and in the hangar areas. Photo coverage showed 70 dispersed aircraft consisting of fighters and bomber transport aircraft of which thirty-five were destroyed on the ground and five were damaged.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Just before the I. P. (Kunszentmiklas) was reached at 1229 hours 2 single engine fighters believed to be ME-109’s were seen flying in from the east but before either could approach the formation they were engaged by P-38’s and one was shot down. Directly over the target 3 ME-109’s were sighted to the north but they were so far away that even distinguishing markings could not be made out. No other enemy aircraft were seen. **Flak:** Over the target this Group experienced moderate, good heavy flak of the predicted variety, “windo was dropped from the I. P. and crew members were unanimous in their opinions that this threw the radar aiming device off. Many bursts were observed 2000 to 5000 feet below the formation and deflection shots in general lacked previous accuracy.

OBSERVATIONS:

At 1236 hours from 20,000 feet a B-24 was seen to explode over target.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Miller	Kaulfuss	Hervey	Gottleib	Conklin	Orley
Ley	Teed	Dawkins	Cross	French	Cummings

04/14/44. Nothing today. We were scheduled for a mission again but the weather was bad again. So we didn't take off.

04/15/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 49. Target; Bucherest, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

04/15/44. Didn't get a mission today again. Started to Bucherest but had a run-away engine and had to come back. *” I got up and we took off on a mission. Got almost the Adriatic and we had a runaway engine on No 3. The feathering motor stuck so we had to return with it (the propeller) wind-milling. The feathering motor had got some bad oil from engine filings and caused it to freeze. The engine was going out anyway. Allen and I checked all of the available fuses and wing splices but no but no trouble in them. Well, after coming in with the engine wind milling the hydraulic pump worked OK to let the (landing) gear down. I went out after changing clothes to help Gerdes pull the engine and put the new engine on. Then Lt. Kahan came out so I had to talk with him a long time on various troubles, etc. Our target for today was Bucherest, Romania.”

04/16/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 50. Target; Brasov, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

04/16/44. I don't know how come, but we weren't even scheduled to fly today. Toni Gayle had an engine change. “* I got up and was not scheduled to fly so I went to church. Lt. Kahan flew a mission with Major Orris. Shorty flew with Lt. Nolte. On the test hop (with the new engine) Babe took Lt. Place as Co-pilot.”

04/17/44. Went to Sofia again today. It only counts as one. That made my 40th mission. Wasn't too hard. Lots of flack. **MY MISSION NO. 40.** *”..... We had a new coverage of P-51 escort, which was pretty good. Over our target our No. 2 supercharger went out so we feathered the engine as it was running so rough.....:

04/17/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 51. Target; Sofia, Bulgaria - Center of City.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-nine B-24's took off at 0916 hours with four early returns. Thirty-five dropped 61 tons of 300 lb. 100#A and M30 G. P. bombs on target at 1228 hours from 20,500 - 21,500 feet. Two jettisoned bombs in Adriatic; one because of engine failure and one because of mechanical malfunction of racks. Thirty-five returned to base at 1415 hours. Escort at 1045 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Group over Manduria at 1019 hours at 8000 feet and with the other Wing Groups along the rendezvous line San Pancrazio - San Vito D' Normanni; with the escort at 1045 hours. Continued on course to Lake Scutari to Leskovac to I. P. (Ponor) where right turn was made onto target which was attacked on an axis of 145 degrees. Rallied right and continued to base.

RESULTS: Pathfinder did the bombing of this group, which was to select the center of the city as the aiming point. Photo coverage showed approximately 200 bursts in the city beginning 2000 feet SW of the cathedral and extending southward for 4000 feet. Bursts were noted in the industrial area between the SE end of the marshaling yard and the cathedral extending 3500 feet SE. There were also 130 hits on the marshaling yard installations. Eighty bursts on tracks and rolling stock, which started fires and 50 other bursts on the repair shop and large warehouse on the SE side of marshaling yard.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters: The first attack came at 1220 hours, eight minutes before the target was reached and it was made by 1 ME-109 and 1 FW-190. The ME-109 made a pass at the formation from low left at 9 O'clock while the FW-190 stood out and fired rockets without ever closing. Concerted attacks from 8 to 10 ME-109's and FW-190's started five minutes later with the majority of passes level from 5 to 8 O'clock. They came singly and in pairs - the pairs breaking off to right and left generally at 400 yards. With the exception of one attack which closed to 50 yards. They were not aggressive and the majority stood off and fired 20 mm (cannon) from 1000 to 1200 yards. All attacks were broken off at 1240 hours and no other enemy aircraft were seen on the route to base. Only one of our aircraft was damaged and that by a 20 mm cannon shell, the fragments which slightly wounded a crewmember. Our claims during the engagement are as follows: 1 ME-109 and 1 FW-190 destroyed. Markings: 1 silver gray ME-109, black cross on white background between tail and trailing edge of wing, yellow nose and tail, entirely yellow on ME-109's. **Flak:** Over the target the flak experienced was moderate to intense, accurate, heavy of the barrage and predicted variety. Flak was also noted at Souteri where it was moderate, inaccurate, heavy. In all, eight of our aircraft were holed.

OBSERVATIONS:

At 1225 hours from 21,500 feet, eight large aircraft seen on Sofia/Bojourische Airdrome.

CASUALTIES: One crewmember was slightly wounded in fighter attack. Eight of our aircraft received slight flack damage. One aircraft received minor damage from fighters.

VICTORIES:

Destroyed:	Probable:	Damaged:
1 ME 109	0	0
1 FW-190		

FLIGHT LEADERS

Snaith	Richman	Scott	Poggi	Loomis	Long
Caywood	Stricklin	Dawkins	Cross	Cantrell	Miles

04/18/44. No mission today. The group all got a day off today. Nothing else new.

04/19/44. A ship (plane) blew up here last Sunday (04/16/44) and two of our (722nd)

crew chief's were hurt trying to move another plane (to a safe place). One of them passed away today. No mission again.

04/20/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 52. Target; Treviso, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

04/20/44. No mission again today for our crew. The group flew one to Northern Italy but we didn't go.

04/21/44. GROUP MISSION NO. 53. Target; Ploesti, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

04/21/44. Started to Ploesti today. We got off and flew around for a couple of hours and came back in. Bad weather. N/C - T/B

4/22/44. Wasn't even a mission scheduled today. Weather is still bad. We also don't get to go to rest camp next week.

4/23/44. Made my 42nd mission today. Went to Schwechat, Austria. Lots of flack but no planes lost that I've heard of. Bombed an aircraft factory and industrial area. **MY MISSION NO. 41 AND 42.** *"...I really sweated out this mission as I left my Mae West and (parachute) harness in the barracks. Never noticed it til I went to get in the turret. Never told anyone about it for a long time. Lowrance noticed it though. Bob forgot his too, the same day. It worked out OK though."

04/23/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 54. Target; Schwechat (Vienna), Austria - Aircraft Factory.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty-two B-24's took off at 1000 hours with four early returns. Thirty-eight dropped 94 tons of 500 lb. R. D. X bombs on target at 1425 hours from 22,000 feet. Two jettisoned 1 ton of bombs because of engine failure. Thirty-seven returned to base at 1750 hours. One crash-landed. Escort at 12400 hours at Lake Balaton at 18,000 feet.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group over Manduria at 1133 hours at 6000 feet and with the other Wing Groups along the rendezvous line San Pancrazio - San Vito D' Normanni at 6000 feet at 1138 hours; with escort at 1400 hours at Lake Balaton at 18,000 feet.

RESULTS: Crew members observed some hits around aiming point, along hangar line and among hangars. there were reports of bombs striking the roof of the building designated at the aiming point and bouncing off which would indicate a heavy reinforced concrete and steel construction. Photo coverage showed approximately fifteen bursts in workshop area between main assembly shop and highway running to Vienna. There were several direct hits on buildings, about twenty-five bursts on runway and some forty hits 2000 - 4000 of field. The single engine and twin engine aircraft destroyed on SW side of field and one twin engine aircraft on NW side of field. There was considerable smoke over the target area, which made additional assessment difficult.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; Only one enemy aircraft was seen during the entire flight and that was an ME-109 in the target area but it was at such distance that the markings could not be distinguished. No attacks recorded. **Flak:** Over target this Group experienced intense, accurate, heavy flak of the predicted variety, slightly damaging 14 of our aircraft. Black predominated in the color of the puffs but some white bursts were noted.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1435 hours from 21,000 feet over target one B-24 seen in spin - one chute out and opened.

CASUALTIES: One B-24 #438, crash-landed in a field near Sava. First engineer Gunner was killed, Second Engineer and Navigator injured. Pilot on aircraft #119 was seriously wounded. Fourteen aircraft damaged by flak.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis	Kingsman	Pitt	McGinnity	Kellman	Bailen
Dawkins	Cross	Weathermon	Siegel	John	Gladstone

4/24/44. We went to Ploesti, Romania, today and it was rough. I got hit by flack in the left shoulder. It was my 44th mission, too. We had fifteen minutes of running flack and it was awful. I was not hurt so bad but had to go to the hospital to get the piece (of flak) taken out. Seemed like I was on the operating table for hours. The Doctor) didn't put me to sleep at all. They did deaden it though and it did not hurt real badly. MY MISSION NO. 43 AND 44. *"I got up early and they pulled an 0700 briefing instead of the usual 0900, so that really upset us. Our target for today was the Ploesti M/Y. Flack Alley would be a better name for it. We got a lot of hits today, but still not as many as a lot of the planes. We got in a terrible prop wash and (doing so) got out of some of the flak. Yet Lowrance got a piece in his shoulder. It came in by the side of the ball turret on the left side. Hit him in the back..... We came in early due to Lowrance. Gerdes found three pieces of flack in the nose plus all the rest." (As I recall, Babe fired flares because of my injury for priority landing. Also, I believe this is the mission that Shorty and I had our chest pack chutes on and were ready to bail out when Al Kahan called on the intercom and told the crew what the situation was. We had hit a "prop wash." I had said so many times that in no way would I ever bail out of an air plane. In a matter of seconds my mind set was changed forever. Shorty and I, in the waist, thought we had been hit and the plane was going down, as there was heavy flak and enemy fighters everywhere. The plane appeared to have been hit and was losing altitude rapidly, although not out of control. I believe, although not certain, that we had hit the prop wash before the flak hit me and before target drop. This knocked Toni Gayle out of the 722nd formation as each squadron flew as an element of the formation. Prop wash is best described as air turbulence from an element of planes in front of our element. The formation is so structured that following elements should not be at the same level and immediately behind the forward element. But in some way Toni Gayle crossed the wash, probably from another squadron ahead of us. In hitting the

prop wash, we lost several thousand feet of altitude in a matter of a few seconds and had no chance of regaining the altitude or our position in the squadron because of the bomb load we were carrying. We would have been flying at an altitude of 22,000 - 23,000 feet on Ploesti and I believe we dropped to an altitude low enough that we did not need oxygen, which would have been 12,000 feet or less. Fortunately we had P-51's as escort over the target and one saw our plight and shepherded us through during the bomb run and afterward back to safe territory. Otherwise, we would have been one of the stragglers that I have been writing about and easy prey for enemy fighters. We were told in briefing that there were 256, 88 mm Anti-aircraft guns in the Ploesti area; all capable of reaching our altitude. Also, that there were 2,000 smoke pots surrounding the target to cover the area. All the A. A. appeared to be working and had our altitude range, as they would lay a barrage of Ack-Ack immediately ahead of us and we had no choice but to fly right into it. It looked like a gray carpet with some black and an occasional pink puff for correction of altitude.)

04/24/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 55. Target; Ploesti, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-eight B-24's took off at 0824 - 900 hours with two early returns. Thirty-four dropped 84 tons of 500 pound G. P. bombs at 1217 hours from 22,000 - 23,000 feet on the target area. One jettisoned bombs near Turnu Severin due to engine failure. One aircraft is lost, and one missing. thirty-four returned to base at 1530 hours. Escort was provided by P-38's and target cover by P-51's as briefed.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group over Manduria at 0919 hours. Proceeded on course to San Vito D' Normanni where the 98th and 376th Bomb Groups joined to complete the Wing formation. Thence as briefed to I. P. The approach to the I. P. (Cocioc) was on a line approximately 5 miles to the south. The turn on the bomb run brought the Group in on a 345 degree heading and due to a complete smoke cover obscuring our primary target the run was slightly to it's left. Rally was left to Pitesti, hence to key point (Budna) to base. Escort was provided by P-38's and target cover by P-51's briefed.

RESULTS: Our aiming point and south end of town was completely covered by smoke screens. Most of our bomb hits were in the northeast portion of the city. Heavy concentration of hits on the East Side of the Vega Oil Refinery, starting a huge fire.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters:** Approximately 24 enemy aircraft were seen in the target area, 15 FW-190's, 8 ME-109's and 1 JU-88. They stayed well out from the formation apparently looking for stragglers. We did not have an encounter. **Flak:** Over the target this Group experienced intense, accurate, heavy flak. Many pink bursts seen. From the north Bucherest area came moderate, accurate, heavy flak. It is believed that some flak was sent up from railroad cars along the route from the I. P. (Cocoic) to the target. 20 of our aircraft were holed. (One being Toni Gayle.)

OBSERVATIONS: One B-24 seen leaving formation at 1225 hours from 22,000 feet. It

crashed at 1240 hours, 10 chutes out. One B-24 left formation in control at 1230 hours. Last seen entering the clouds. (Was the last referred to Toni Gayle???) Target time 1217 hours.)

CASUALTIES: Waist Gunner in **821** was seriously wounded by flak. (**Could this be a typo error and be #221, Toni Gale, as I was injured on this mission ???** There is no listing in the Archives of the 450th Bomb Group having a plane #821.) One aircraft lost 10 chutes opened; one missing - no chutes seen and one crashed on landing due to flak holes in left tire. 20 aircraft were holed by flak, 1 severe, 19 minor.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith	Kaecker	Tate	Kantner	Miller	Bailen
Varevil	Wetzel	Maddux	Tipton	Robinson	Stricklin

04/25/44. GROUP MISSION NO 56. Target; Varese, Italy - Aircraft Factory.

04/25, 04/26 and 04/27. No entries.

04/28/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 57. Target; Orbetello, Italy - Aircraft Factory.

4/28/44. *” I started on a mission north of Rome when we had all four generators go out. We were pulling a sneak raid as we were going up the Adriatic then completely across Italy. We turned back and landed at a B-17 and (British) Halifax base near Foggia. We got two generators to work and came in by changing all voltage regulators around. (**Caldwell and Gleason were two of the twelve FLIGHT LEADERS listed.**)

04/28/44. I have been in (the hospital) here two days now and don't like it so well. I feel OK. Oh yes, I got my Purple Heart yesterday. Col. Mills, himself, presented it to me. Several of the boys have been up to see me. Even Major Orris and Lt. Phillips.

04/29/44. GROUP MISSION NO 58. Target; Toulon, France - Harbor Installations.

04/29/44. Major Orris, our Squadron CO, and Lt. Phillips, with McLaughlin's crew, went down at Toulon, France today. Also, Maddux (and his crew). (They) Moved me out of the convalescent (center) and I don't like it. (I was hospitalized at the 35th Field Hospital, which must have been a general hospital for all Commands, including Army ground forces. There was a tent morgue at the back of our building, which appeared to be a school building and the injured was bedded in the gymnasium. This morgue was reported to be stacked with corpses, and must have been used by front line troops, too. Few flying losses came in DOA (Dead on Arrival.) Most never made it back.) Our crew made its first mission today since my injury and Morris caught up with me. We now each had 44 missions.) *”I went on an early mission to Toulon (France Harbor area) Submarine Docks. Had heavy, intense and accurate flack. We lost Major Orris Our Squadron Navigator and Bombardier with Lt. McLaughlin's EM crew plus Sgt. Deal who was on his first mission as nose gunner. All the crew was supposed to get out by reports.

Lt. Maddux' crew went down too. They got a direct hit on the left wing wheel well. S/Sgt. Moody, cameraman, was with Major Orris too. So that took a toll of our friends. **MISSION 44.** (Although the crew started on three other missions while I was hospitalized and subsequent grounding, they had to turn back for various reasons, this is the only mission completed while I was hospitalized and before being returned to flying status. We also spent 6 days at Rest Camp from

04/30/44 to 05/05/44. I was only at Rest camp from 05/01 to 05/05/44.

5/5/44. Narrative listed for informational purposes, although I was not on the mission.)

04/29/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 58. Target; Toulon, France - Harbor Installations

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-six B-24's took off at 0722 - 0808 hours to bomb Toulon Harbor. There were four early returns. Twenty-seven dropped 65 ½ tons of 1000 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1225 hours from 19,000 feet. Three others jettisoned four tons in Mediterranean from hung bomb racks, an engine failure and malfunction. Twenty-six returned to base at 1530 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Group over Manduria at 0826 hours. On course to San Vito D' Normanni. The other groups comprising the Wing were given an opportunity to join. From that point the route was to Ponza Island, to key point, to turning point. The I. P. was slightly overshoot causing a run toward target for several minutes on a 60-degree heading. This was then changed to 30 degrees on Bomb run. Rally was sharp left, thence to Ponza Island and to base. Escort of 25 to 30 P-38's was seen from the I. P. - over the target area, and on the withdrawal point at 1305 hours.

RESULTS: A very heavy concentrated smoke screen obscured the target area. Returning crews believe that the bomb run was excellent and that many hits on or near the aiming point should have resulted. Photo coverage shows 25 bursts beginning 2500 feet south of target and extending into the smoke on a favorable axis. A burst was plotted approximately 1000 feet northwest of the aiming point.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: Fighters; There is definite identification of only one enemy aircraft, a ME-109 seen in the target area. It did not press an attack and possibly was used as a flak spotter. **Flak:** Experienced crews believe that the flak encountered was the most accurate our Group has seen. Both predicted and aimed fire was used, breaking in rapid sequence of fours. This heavy type flak was accurate both as to deflection and altitude. Three ships were lost over the target area and ten others returned with varying amounts of flak damage.

OBSERVATIONS: Over target from 19,000 feet at 1226 hours, three B-24's were seen going down. From 23 to 25 chutes were counted.

CASUALTIES: Three bombers lost from flack, 23 to 25 chutes seen. Ten aircraft

received minor flack damage.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Orris (722nd CO)	Lehman	Weathermon	Siegel	French	Cummings
Kellman	Bailen	Pitt	McGinnity	Loomis	Long

The shrapnel removed from my shoulder was about the size of my thumb, or smaller, and it had lodged against my left shoulder blade. Had it penetrated a couple inches lower, it would have hit my flack suit and I wouldn't have gotten a scratch. The intense cold at the altitude we were flying at reduced the pain and was not really too bothersome. Jimmy Gleason rendered First Aid with the medical kit on board. I still have the medical kit scissors as well as the Radio Manual from the set of Instruction Manuals that came with the plane. The medical kit contained a syringe with pain medication and Jimmy kept asking if I wanted a shot for the pain. I didn't, as I was about as scared of the needle as I was of the injury. By the time we landed back at the base, the pain was more intense. Mostly because of the temperature at lower altitude. Temperatures at altitudes of 18,000 to 26,000 feet, at which we usually flew a mission could reach 50 to 60 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. The piece of flak, surgically removed from my shoulder, was given to me by the surgeon on the piece of bloody gauze it was extracted on. I kept it, bloody gauze and all, until after the war ended and no doubt would still have it, but for my mother. My parents were in business at the time and I was working with them. She had asked to have the piece of shrapnel to show people and somehow she lost it and could never explain where or how. This was probably one of my life's greatest disappointments and I have my own ideas as to the why of it. Oh well, such is life.

4/30/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 59. Target; Alessandria, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

04/30/44. All my crew came by going to rest camp today at Santa Cesara. My pilot talked to my doctor so I am getting out tomorrow to go down myself. Providing I come back next Saturday (May 6) and get my stitches taken out. *” I got up early, packed, and got ready to go to rest camp. We got paid just before leaving. We all stopped by to see Lowrance on the way. We went out of our way to see him at the 35th Field Hospital. I had his mail for him. We are at Santa Cesarea Rest Camp. I had to use Bob (and Anzo's) room to write (in) as Allen and I do not have lights. Levis is taking care of the E. M. (enlisted men's hotel at the rest camp).

05/1/44. Got out of the hospital today. Went back to camp. Got paid and Major North took me to Rest Camp with the boys. *” I got up early for a leisure day. Allen and I took our 45's and went down to the Adriatic. I shot all my ammo that I had with me so Allen gave me two shells. I put them in my clip and forgot about them. I had the clip in and charged my gun thinking it was empty and pulled the trigger. It went off in our room. He (Allen) was in the bathroom. I let the clip out after I put the one in the chamber. The bullet went through my O. D. cap and bed, hit the marble floor, and went into the door. Luckily it did not hurt any one. I was too careless but I learned a lesson. I went out with him (Allen) in the afternoon and we went for a boat ride. Then I went to take a bath on

my return to the hotel. Major North and Cook brought Lowrance in so we three moved upstairs. Allen went in the room next to Lowrance and I. Shorty stayed with Levis in his room. Lowrance brought me two sweet letters from my honey and one from home.

05/2/44. Sure is a nice place here. It's sort of like a summer resort and we are living in a big hotel (San Cesara). Chow is really good. (San Cesara is on the very Southern undermost arch of the heel of Italy where the Mediterranean and Adriatic join and one could see the coast of Albania on a clear day..)

05/3/44. About the same today. Not much happened. Went for a boat ride in the Ocean. Also, had a dance tonight. (I didn't go. Morris mentions that Levis is taking care of the EM's hotel at rest camp. Levis was a former crewmate, mentioned earlier, grounded because his grand parents were living in Northern Italy.)

05/4/44. Getting kind of tiresome (here) now. Nothing to do but read and sleep. And that is about all I have been doing, too. (The hotel was nice but had no private bathrooms and lights were off much of the time.)

05/5/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 60: Target; Ploesti, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

05/5/44. Came back home (to camp) tonight. Everybody was about ready to come back, too. Good chow and beds, though. I hated to leave them.

05/6/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 61: Target; Brasov, Romania - Northwest Marshaling Yard.

05/6/44. Went up to the (Thirty-fifth Field) Hospital and had the stitches taken out of my shoulder. The crew was on a flight but had to come back. (because of an oil leak.) They made only one mission while I was in the hospital. Morris caught up with me. We each have 44 missions now.

05/7/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 62: Target; Bucherest, Romania - Marshaling Yard.

05/7/44. My crew started out again today but they (the group) all came back. (Target was overcast.) So far, I have only missed one single mission.

05/8/44. Well, I'm off ground (being grounded) again. They took me off and had not even looked at my shoulder. It kind of surprised me.

05/9/44. Still no mission. My crew is scheduled to fly, but I'm not. I can't figure out why either.

05/10/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 63: Target; Weiner Neustadt, Austria - Werk No. 1.

05/10/44. I was taken off (being) grounded today but wasn't scheduled to fly. My crew

was but they came back. Target, Weiner Neustadt, was overcast again.

05/11/44. Another mission was scheduled but they had to turn back. Bad weather, I think.

05/12/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 64: Target; San Stephano, Italy - Harbor Installations.

05/12/44. They finally made a mission today. We started out but had to come back. We lost two ships. Ward's and Smith's. Two collided. (Ward's and Smith's?)

05/13/44. Made my first mission today since I got hit (in the shoulder by flak. Made me 45. Five more to go now. I'm sure sweating them now. Mission was to Piacenza M/Y, Italy. (I was grounded from 04/24/through 05/10/44.)

4/24/44 the date of my injury, until this mission.) **MISSION NO. 45.**

05/13/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 65: Target; Piacenza, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty B-24's took off at 0957 - 1039 hours with four early returns. Thirty-six dropped 88.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1453 hours from 20,500 feet. One jettisoned 1.5 tons because of malfunction of bomb rack. Thirty-five returned to base at 1805 hours. One was forced enroute to stop for fuel and landed at a base at 2020 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Group over Manduria at 1057 hours at 5000 feet and with other Wing groups on a course to San Vito D' Normanni at 6000 feet at 1103 hours; with escort of 30 P-51's at 1405 hours at Capriaia, (Escort withdrew at 1530 hours in vicinity of Corsica.) On course to I. P. (Bobbio) and attacked target on axis of 38 degrees. Rallied right and continued on briefed course to base.

RESULTS: Good concentration of bomb hits in target area with many bomb hits at choke point and large fires started. Large explosion observed in south edge of marshaling yard. Photo coverage shows this mission hits on transshipment sheds, narrow gauge railroad tracks, cement plant installations, pumping stations, electric locomotive shops and railroad station. Smoke from preceding group makes spotting of individual hits difficult but it appears that bombs of 1st Attack Unit slightly long, while the 2nd Attack Unit put a concentrated pattern on the aiming point.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** None observed or encountered.

OBSERVATIONS: None.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Gideon	Glavin	McWhorter	Gross	Kellman	Coates
Conklin	Buksa				

05/14/44. Made another mission today. My 46th one. Went to Northern Italy. The same as yesterday. No flak, no (enemy) fighters. Mission was to Vicenza, **MY MISSION NO. 46.** “*We had an undercast, so Major Snaith took us around three times so that (we) could all get rid of (our) bombs. We were on the outside of three right turns so I was sweating it out as we could not keep in there pulling 2500 RPM's and 45” H.G..... all the other planes in our element having trouble too.

05/14/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 66. Target; Vicenza, Italy - Marshaling Yard.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty B-24's took off 0755 - 0827 hours to bomb Marshaling Yard at Vicenza, Italy. One returned early. Thirty-eight dropped 92.75 tons of 500 lb. clusters on target are at 1148 - 1155 and 1203 hours from 19,000 feet. Three jettisoned because of release malfunction, one jettisoned because he had one engine out and couldn't maintain formation. Thirty-nine returned to base at 1430 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Group over Manduria at 3000 at 0844; with other Wing Groups on course to San Vito D' Normanni; with escort of 3- to 40 P-38's, P-47's and P-51's (escort withdrew at 1210 hours at coast). Continued to key point to approximate I. P. turning left and passing west of target to avoid possible bomb release of an attack unit at a higher altitude approaching from west and attacking on an axis of 150 degrees. Turned to attack target again on axis of 150 degrees to base.

RESULTS: Photo coverage shows bursts extending across the woolen mill and highway to the south with the main concentration of bursts SE of target area.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** In target area it was slight, inaccurate and heavy with none coming from the target itself. At Padova it was heavy and appeared accurate against other attack units, coming up in single bursts of black. At Pola, it was moderate, accurate and heavy but damage was limited to two holes in one aircraft. This Pola flak came up in bursts of four, colored black and gray and seemed to be of the predicted variety from four gun batteries.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1145 hours from 20,000 feet, smoke seen at Verona. At 1130 hours from 20,000 feet, heavy cruiser saw in the harbor at Trieste.

CASUALTIES: None

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith	Kaecker	French	Cummings	Beth	Coates
Conklin	Buksa				

05/15/44. No mission today. Don't know why. Bad weather, I guess. It's (the weather is)

pretty here though. Nothing else new. 05/16/44. Still no mission again today. The weather is real nice, too. So do not know yet why there isn't one.

05/17/44. Made another mission, finally. We went to Northern Italy. Almost to where Ward and Smith went down. Heavy flack. No ships lost. Mission was to San Stephano. **MISSION NO. 47.** “*We had heavy, accurate flack, but not too many hits. One almost got into our gas tanks in (through) the Bombay's.....

05/17/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 67: Target; Porto San Stefano, Italy - Railroad and Dock Facilities.

CHRONOLOGY: Forty B-24's took off at 1017 - 1046 hours to bomb the dock facilities, road and railroad at Porto San Stefano. No early returns. Forty aircraft dropped 99.25 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1134 hours from 19,500 - 21,500 feet. One aircraft jettisoned .25 tons in Mediterranean shortly after leaving target area due to bomb rack or release malfunctions. Forty aircraft returned to base at 1554 hours. Escort of 20 P-51's at 1252 hours. Escort withdrew at 1345 hours.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group at Manduria at 4000 feet at 1107 hours; with Wing groups on course to San Vito D'Normanni at 4000 feet at 1113 hours; to Capri; to key point at Palmarola Island; with escort of 20 P-51's at 1252 hours; (escort withdrew at 1345 hours) on course to I. P. and attacked target on axis of 73 degrees. Rallied left and continued on briefed course to base.

RESULTS: Entire target was well covered with heavy concentration of bombs. Railroads and highways were out and tunnels blocked. Ships in harbor apparently hit. Many storage buildings in the harbor area were blown up. photo coverage shows heavy concentration of bombs over the entrance and exit of the railroad tunnel, bursts over the buildings, highway, railroad and loading jetties. Direct hits on the railroad tunnel, buildings at east and West End of this tunnel received direct hits. Heavy concentration of bursts hitting both railroad and highway and extending eastward covering 5 to 7 harbor boats, one of which is believed to be a torpedo boat. A high explosion was observed soon after the formation left the target. Flame and smoke shot into the air 5,000 to 10,000 feet.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Enroute to the target, at Giglio Island, slight, inaccurate light flak was encountered. Over target area it was moderate, accurate heavy of the: predicted variety. 17 of our ships were holed. Flak over the target was accurate as briefed. The puffs over the target area were mostly black, with a few white bursts.

OBSERVATIONS: None

CASUALTIES: 17 aircraft received minor flack damage.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Mills (450 th CO)	Carr	Caywood	Miles	Davis	Leebody
Scott	Poggi	Tate	Kantner	Kellman	Bailen

05/18/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 68. Target; Ploesti/Unirea Sperantza Oil Refinery/18/44. We were off today. The rest (of the group) was supposed to go to Ploesti but they didn't get there because of the weather. I bet we go next time.

05/19/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 69. Target; Spezia, Italy - Railroad Installations.

05/19/44. No mission for us today either. The same set up as yesterday. (The rest of our group) went to Northern Italy. Lost a new (replacement) crew with Shain as pilot. By this time we had begun to get many replacement crews and planes. All the new planes were silver colored as they had determined that the paint weighing some 76 pounds, was causing unnecessary drag on airflow over the plane's body. Many of the 17-18 year old replacements were a cocky bunch with an attitude of "The war is as good as won, I'm here." After their first mission I have seen them age five years on a five or six hour flight over enemy territory. They grew up very quickly and in a very short period of time.

05/20/44. We still didn't fly today. Well, no better than I like to fly, I sure won't ask to. (It appears there is a conflicting entry here. I show a Diary entry as making a mission but Morris' doesn't. Since the mission No. 47 was made 5/17, is a duplication too. Also, the 450th History book shows no mission by the group on this date. Sometimes I did not make entries daily, but would make them a day or so later. Next entry is as Diary gives it.)

05/21/44. Made a mission today. My 47th one. Not many to go now. I'll finish soon, one way or the other. (This entry also is apparently in error as the 450th History Book gives no mission for this date. It must be for the 22nd when a mission is shown which corresponds to Morris' entry. My diary shows my 47th mission as being made on May 17.)

05/22/44. My 48th mission completed today. It wasn't too bad but I was scared anyway. Went to Northern Italy again. (Latasano, Italy) **MISSION NO. 48.** *"I went on a mission to a bridge near LaSpezia Port, but due to weather conditions we had to bomb a railroad bridge nearer home as the weather was too bad up there. We did not hit the bridge, the main objective, but tore up the (RR) tracks near the bridge. We had a lot of flack but our group did all get back OK."

05/22/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 70: Target; Latisano, Italy - Railroad Bridge.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-nine B-24's took off at 0915 - 940 hours to bomb the Latisano Railroad Bridge. None returned early. Thirty-eight dropped 93.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target of opportunity (railroad tracks and highway 5 miles north of Pescara, Italy). at 1244 hours from 20,000 - 21,000 feet. Two others jettisoned 3.5 tons due to malfunction of bomb release mechanism. Thirty-nine returned to base at 1353 hours. None lost. None missing. None at friendly fields.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 49th Bomb Group over Manduria at

3000 feet at 1006 hours; with other Wing Groups on course to San Vito D' Normanni at 4000 feet at 1012 hours. Then on course until slightly short of key point where formation headed East to avoid bad weather. After circling in an endeavor to find a break through the clouds, which reached 20,000 feet, proceeded to Italian Coast and to target of opportunity, 5 miles north of Pescara. Route back followed coastline and hence to base. No rendezvous was made with fighter escort.

RESULTS: Bombs straddled railroad and highway in heavy concentration approximately 1500 feet north of Saline River bridge about (no miles listed) miles north of Pescara. Numerous hits seen around target and tracks believed to be cut.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over the target area, this Group experienced moderate, excellent, heavy type flak, damaging 2 aircraft seriously and 16 slightly. All bursts were black.

OBSERVATIONS: None.

CASUALTIES: Nose gunner in aircraft #226 was slightly wounded. Eighteen aircraft received flak damage, 2 severe and 16 minor.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Snaith	Carr	Caywood	Stricklin	Beth	Long
Hefner	Sanchez				

05/23/44. My 49th Mission completed today. Went to N. Italy again. Quite a lot of flack but no (enemy) fighters. **Caldwell and Gleason listed as Flight Leaders on this mission. MISSION NO. 49.** *” I got up early and went on a mission to troop concentration near Rome. (Frascati M/Y, Marina, Italy) Our target was Berth. We had some flack, yet not too much. Weather conditions caused the group to go around twice. A silver plane almost ran into LT. Dawkins. He came around and just missed us. We went over and down to get out of the way and stayed out of the way and stayed out of reach. When we got out over water we made a circle alone to keep from going back in over the target as we lost too much altitude in the screw up. We caught the formation near Taranto as we came down there to loaf around until the group came along. We came back with three holes in #901. It was a new plane with only a few hours on it. Electronic Superchargers. Allen was the engineer that day.” (Was this one made on a substitute plane?)

05/23/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 71. Target; Grataferrata, Italy - Troop Concentrations.

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty-nine B-24's took off 0725 - 0752 hours to bomb troop concentrations in Grataferrata Area. Two returned early. Twenty-six dropped 65 tons 500 lb. G. P. bombs on target at 1116 hours from 19,000 - 20,000 feet. Two jettisoned 5 tons, one because of the loss of one engine and the other it was forced out of formation and couldn't regain its position without lightening its load. (The last part of this entry must have been referring to #901, the plane we were flying.) Nine returned 22.5 tons to base

because overcast obscured target. Thirty-seven returned to base at 1235 hours. None lost. None missing. None at friendly field.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group over Manduria at 6000 feet at 0825 hours; with other Wing Groups on course to San Pancrazio to San Vito D' Normanni at

0833 hours. Thence on course to Capri, to Ponza Island, to I. P., to target on axis of 68 degrees where 10/10 cloud cover so obscured target that a 360 degree turn was necessary and another run made on same axis of attack. The rally was right to Monteinico, to Trepaula, to Capri, to base. Escort rendezvous at 1015 hours over Ponza Island with 20 to 30 P-38's which withdrew near Anzio at 1120 hours. 10 P-47's observed as cover over target.

RESULTS: Photo coverage reveals six bursts 600 feet north of Villa Cavaletti; several bursts on the Villa Grazioli; several bursts approximately 1000 feet north Villa of Grazioli; approximately 20 bursts across small buildings.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over target area: moderate, accurate and heavy with apparently one mobile battery firing. Over beachhead area: moderate, accurate, heavy. Nine of our aircraft holed.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1032 hours from 20,000 feet 3 bombs were seen to drop from B-24 formation landing in the water near 3 cargo ships. At 1021 hours from 19,000 feet a heavy cruiser was observed heading toward Anzio. At 1028 hours from 19,000 feet 6 unidentified aircraft were observed bombing ships in harbor.

CASUALTIES: Navigator in aircraft #990 was slightly wounded from flack. Nine aircraft received flack damage, two severe and seven minor.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Davis Leebody Scott Poggi Dawkins Glavin
Caldwell Gleason (Our pilot and Bombardier)

05/24/44. GROUP MISSION NO 72. Target; Weiner Neustadt, Austria - Wollersdorf Airdrome.

05/24/44. Our crew was off today. All but one. (crew member?) The rest went to Weiner Neustadt. We lost one crew. A new one. *” ...The boys had taken our plane to Weiner Neustadt and really got it shot up. They are changing No. 4 engine, the elevator, and doing a lot of patchwork on the plane.”

05/25 /44. A big day today. I finished my 50th mission. How nice it feels to be through. Went to North Italy again. (Porto Marghere, Italy.) No trouble, but how I did sweat it. I was more scared on it than (on) my first one. (I'm) through flying, I think. **MISSION**

NO. 50 AND IT'S ALL OVER. *” The big day of my life was the 25th as I went on my last combat mission in the M.A.A.F. Our target was an oil storage and refinery at Port Marghera in the Northern end of the Adriatic and did I sweat it out! Lowrance and I finished together. Babe did some Buzz jobs and kept us up as long as he could shooting flares. We all did a sweet job on the target and had light, inaccurate flak.”

05/25/44 <GROUP MISSION NO. 73. Target; Porto Marghera, Italy - Oil Storage Dump

CHRONOLOGY: Thirty - six B-24's took off 0920 - 0946 hours to bomb the Porto Marghera, Italy Oil Storage Installations. Thirty-one dropped 73.5 tons of 500 lb. G. P. bombs on the target at 1240 hours from 19,000 - 21,000 feet. Three jettisoned 3.5 tons in the Adriatic as a result of mechanical malfunctions with racks and releases. Thirty-one returned to base at 1503 hours. There were no losses and none at friendly airdromes.

ROUTE AND ASSAULT: Rendezvoused with the 449th Bomb Group over Manduria at 1004 hours hence to San Vito D' Normanni to complete the Wing assembly. On course to I. P. which was Piore. Went from that point over the target on a 50-degree course. Rally was right, then to base.

RESULTS: The aiming points for both attack units were well covered with strikes. Concentrations of bombs into target areas ignited oil storage tanks and smoke rose 10,000 feet as we left the target. Photo coverage indicates large fires and smoke indicating a good concentration of bombs.

ENEMY RESISTANCE: **Fighters;** None observed or encountered. **Flak:** Over the target, slight inaccurate heavy type flak was observed. A few rockets were fired from 3 ships in the harbor. These were inaccurate, but trailed white smoke and exploded with a red flash.

OBSERVATIONS: At 1230 hours from 20,000 feet, 3 large merchant vessels. (possibly transports) and 10 small merchant vessels were seen in Venice Harbor. At 1155 hours, from 17,000 feet the harbor at Ancona was observed devoid of any shipping. The same observation is noted at 1215 hours from 19,000 feet at Rimini.

CASUALTIES: None.

FLIGHT LEADERS:

Loomis	Long	Snaith	Richman	Caywood	Stricklin
Radue	Cherry				

05/26/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 74. Target; Nice, France - Marshaling Yard.

05/26/44. I had no entry this day. *”.....All the others were flying except Lowrance and I. went out and sweat out Lanier and the crew coming in. **(Lanier,s 50th Mission? Caldwell and Gleason listed as two of eight Flight Leaders on this mission.)**

05/27/44. <GROUP MISSION NO 75. Target; Marseille, France - St. Charles Marshaling Yard.

05/27/44. Not much to do now. But nothing to worry about either. I can really sleep well now. *” I went out and sweat out Caldwell, Kahan, Place and Shorty as they were all finishing up this day. I painted the bombs and the enemy fighters plus the engine changes. (Swastika’s for kills, engines for engine changes and bombs for missions completed. Morris reports that Toni Gayle had the dubious distinction of having the most engine changes, thirteen, of any plane in the 450th) We all got a big kick out of that. (Most of the boys tied on a big one that night and having hang-over next day. I stayed out of it.)

05/28/44. Went to Chapel today. But that is about all I’ve done. We had an air raid alert today. (No bombs were dropped on the base, though. During the time we were at Manduria no bombs were dropped on the base and we had only these three air-raid alerts that I can recall.)

05//29/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 76. Target; Weiner Neustadt, Austria - Wollersdorf Airdrome. Gleason is listed as one of the FLIGHT LEADERS on this mission. (This may have been his final mission.)

05/29/44. Not much to do. Had a picture taken to send the hometown newspaper. (The group made a) mission to Weiner Neustadt. No losses.

05/30/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 77. Target; Ebreichsdorf, Austria - Aircraft Factory.

05/30/44. Not doing anything, so there is not much to write about. We went to town but didn’t stay long. (On this date on **MISSION NO 77** with target As Ebreichsdorf, Austria under: **ENEMY RESISTANCE; LISTING “C”**: **Plane #221**: Two ME-109’s made an individual attack from 5 to 7 O’clock, level. Later another attacked from 6 O’clock level.

05/31/44. <GROUP MISSION NO. 78. Target; Ploesti, Romania - Romano/American Oil Refinery.

This completes Robert A. Davis Book No. 1, of S-2 Narratives for Missions made by the 450th Bomb Group through May 31, 1944 and would undoubtedly cover most of the missions flown by the originally assigned crews formed at Alamogordo, New Mexico.

05/31/44. We got paid today. Had another (air raid) alert last night. The third night in a row. (The group) went to Ploesti today. Lost Barrett’s and Shaffer’s planes.

06/1/44. No mission (for the Group) today. I’m done now but still like to keep up with the boys (still flying). We got in another new crew today. (One replacement crew we got never made it to the Manduria Air Base. The Nazi’s got on to the frequency of our base

Homing Radio Beacon and over rode it with a stronger signal. The pilot over flew the base on the stronger signal to Jugoslavia and they were shot down.)

June 1, 1944 ends my Diary entries. As my Diary was small, about 2 1/2" x 5", and had seven days per page, entries were necessarily condensed. We were continually reminded not to keep in our possession any information that would be of any military value to the enemy, and is another reason for the brevity of my diary. Morris continues his through his return to the States. In order to carry my story forward, and with his permission, I have used excerpts from his Diary as an aid to continue my narrative through June 26. His entries would be pretty much consistent as to what most of us did to occupy our time on board the convoy Liberty ship returning us to the States. We all had to pull Guard Duty and K. P..., but I do not recall pulling much K. P.

06/2/44. *" I got up early and went out to the line to help Gerdes to pass the time. He was changing No. 4 engine as it went out after 18 hours, on the final approach....."

06/3/44. *" I got up and packed to move out of the barracks and we just settled in the tent when we found out that we were going to leave the next morning."

06/4/44. *" I got up and ready to leave at 09:00. We turned in our (gear) and then had a talk by Col. Gideon. He was very nice to us and gave us an invitation to come back to the 450th group. We came to the Naples Airport on the Toni Gayle. Lt. Lindell piloted us with his engineer and a new Co-pilot, Lt. Weatherman "Boogie Trap" (Is this the Boobie Trap I referred to in my entry of 03/30/44, we flew to Sofia?) brought Lt. Nolte as C. P., Herrin as engineer, and Brown. (T/Sgt. John H. Brown who flew over with us?) We got a truck at last for P. B. S. No. 6 - We all got in tents with the 435th. Co. There were no officer's come on with us then."

06/5/44. *" I got up for breakfast then we policed up, had a clothing check. After chow at noon we drew some more necessities. In the evening went to the show, "Chip Off The Old Block."

06/6/44. *" Just loafed around all day. Played some ball. Went to the show in the evening and saw Danny Kaye and Dinah Shore in "Up In Arms."

06/07/44. *" I almost got a sunburn. Played some ball. I went to the show and saw "Woman Courageous" with Loretta Young....."

06/08/44. I spent the morning reading and was too sore to go out in the sun any. We just laid around reading and getting sack time.

06/09/44. *" I got up and was getting ready to go to town when I found out we were on general alert and we could not get passes. So I settled down to sack time. In the evening I went to see the show "Buffalo Bill"....."

06/10/44. *" I got up early..... got a hair cut.. showered, washed my head. And in the

evening we all joined in a game a volley ball game.... I got quite a sun burn out of it though. We had a lot of fun out of it too.”

06/11/44. *” I just laid around in the morning reading. In the afternoon we got out to play ball again. I was quite sun burned though already on my chest. But I would still not give up. I seemed to hit the unlucky side as we still lost all our games.”

06/12/44. *” I got up early and felt OK for a while then that sunburn on my chest set me on fire itching. I did go to sick call and they doctored it up some. In the afternoon I went back to get some more dope..... I still went out and played volleyball. After that I took a shower then I almost went nuts. I went to the show, but it was not much good so I left early.”

06/13/44. *” Well, I got my orders to ship Tried to get money exchanged, and a short arm. Med. slip ready and packed to go at any notice. We were not supposed to go out much, but Babe and Lt. Place came over to see me. **Babe is a Captain now.** Well I went to the PX, walked by with them and got my PX supplies, then returned to the Co.”

06/14/44. *” I got up and we had some visitors - tank drivers which really gave us the low down on the front lines. I was in the money exchange line again when they ran out (of money). In the afternoon they got the money so I was 2nd in line. I taken a shower and washed some clothes. Went to see the picture “Nine Girls.”

06/15/44. *” I got up and we came out by truck (to the port of Naples) after lugging our bags for about a mile. Got on the Liberty ship Hawthorne, a 10,000 ton cruiser or used for that purpose. We are still in the Naples Harbor waiting to finish the unloading. We missed lunch, but had good chow at dinner.”

06/16/44. *” I was up and we pulled out about and we pulled out about 9:00 A.M., came through and we could see the Isle of Capri. The volcano in Sicily through the Straits of Messina to Augusta was our route.

06/17/44. We docked in the Augusta Harbor today waiting on the rest of our convoy. We just laid around awaiting the pull out all day.

06/18/44. *” I was still lying around all day in the Augusta Harbor. Just laid around getting a suntan..... It was Sunday too and I was lonely..... Around 1730 we pulled out of the harbor.....”

06/19/44. *” I got up out on the deck this morning and could see land afar off on our left that indicated we were still going around Sicily. We had a larger convoy as we picked up ships during the night.....”.

06/20/44. My day as usual consisted going up on deck. But today the land was on our left side, meaning we were along the coast of Africa. We passed the Island of Bizerte. White and I spent most of the day out front of the ship. We saw some porpoises out there in front of our ship after food the other ships had thrown out. We had our first boat drill

today. I went to see the 1st. Sgt. about the missing of guard duty and he was nice about it. Told me I would be on again soon.... During the day I saw two aircraft carriers with planes on them. My first ones to see. I have begun to see a few different types of ships. The destroyers were escorting the carriers pretty close. We have an escort too.

06/21/44. *”....Sunbathed on deck... Watched the formation.....”

06/22/44. *”..... Have only a little time on deck today as it is rainy and bad. One cannot observe very good. I could see the coast today but cannot tell much about it. We were supposed to have passed the Harbor of Algiers today.”

06/23/44. *”..... I went up on deck in the afternoon to take a sunbath. We are still traveling in the Mediterranean Sea. Can see land on our left side now, but we are sweating out the Straits (of Gibraltar)? now as we have passed Roan or were supposed to have.”

06/24/44. I got up as usual and we just went up to chow and we thought we could see land on both sides of us, but we must not have seen it only on the African side as we have traveled on all day and as yet we have not seen the Rock of Gibraltar or passed through the Straits. It is very windy and cloudy though this evening, so I sure am in hopes we soon get through the Straits as I am sweating it out. I have stayed around most of the day reading as it was too cold and windy to lie up on deck. At present I am ready to start reading again as the time passes faster while the mind is occupied.

06/25/44. I got up as usual and lay around in the morning reading stories and in my New Testament. I went up to get a sun tan on the ship deck and I got more or less, a windburn as I am rather red all over again. I spend too much time in the sun. Then I came in. We are out in the blue (Atlantic) now.”

06/26 through 07/09/44. The rest of the trip on the convoy was pretty routine. We slept, had chow three times a day, lounged on deck, went to the movies, pulled KP and did guard duty as demanded of us. The weather was calm and clear, cloudy and rainy. The Atlantic was smooth as glass part of the time and about as rough as it could be with high waves and rolling ship at other times.

07-10-44. Our Liberty ship docked at New Port News, VA. Others in the convoy docked at other ports up and down the East Coast. Ones designated docking port probably had relationship to the area of the U. S. we were headed to for our fifteen day furlough. Both Andy and I were from the Mid-west. He, from Manhattan, KS, at the time, but would return to Mexico City, in 1948, where he married, raised two children and still resides. Caldwell, Kahan, Place, Gleason, Clark and Lanier must have docked at New York City.

Upon docking, we were entrained to the Norfolk Naval Base by rail in an antiquated day car with wooden bench seats. There, we were treated with respect as combat veterans and were given most any kind of food we could desire, which was a real treat. My greatest hunger was for milk, as this would be my first fresh milk since going overseas. I must have drunk a gallon at my first meal at the base. The powdered milk we

had in Manduria was hardly fit for consumption. It was also here that I had my first fresh pork or beef since leaving South America the previous December. Frozen foods were not available as this process had not been perfected at that time. I was temporarily assigned to the Naval Base for several days for processing, de-briefing and physical exams. From here I had my first and only fifteen-day furlough during my time in service. and headed for home, arriving on July 14, 1944. The furlough ended all too soon, but there was war to win and I still had a part to play.

We were split up as a crew at Naples. Although we were in the same camp, we were assigned to different tents and camp areas. We all returned to the U. S. in the same convoy but few of us were together on the same ship. Andy Anzo and I were the only ones from our crew on this Liberty ship but do not recall if we were on the same deck, or the name of the ship. If we were it could have been hundreds of bunks and feet apart. The convoy was large, perhaps as many as one hundred or more vessels, with most of them Liberty Cargo ships. Naval War ships of various types, except Air Craft Carriers escorted it. In the Mediterranean area and into the Atlantic in which German U-Boats were reported to be operating, we also had protection from Blimps. Most were a type tethered to the ships by steel cables but some were piloted and used as U-Boat spotters. Steel cables several hundred feet in the air and prevented German dive-bombers getting down really close to the convoy tethered the Blimps. This lasted until we were well out to sea and beyond the range of German Bombers.

Henry J. Kaiser was originator and builder of the Liberty ships and he built them by the hundreds. He was experimenting with a ship constructed with a concrete hull to conserve steel. Had the war continued for many years he would have had them under construction and probably in service on the high seas. After the War, he tried manufacturing automobiles and built Kaiser and Frazer automobiles from 1948 through the early 60's when competition from the other companies forced him out of business. Although the cars were well ahead of their time in style, they could not attract enough buyers from the established companies to become successful. He also built the Henry J, a first in compact cars, which was produced two or three years before the company folded. Sears Roebuck sold this car, both by catalog order and in their retail stores

07/29/44. After my fifteen-day furlough ended, my assignment was to report to Miami Beach, FL, for R & R, debriefing and hospital psychiatric evaluation. Inabelle was allowed to accompany me as my NCO status of T/Sgt. permitted. All military travel was by train, so we headed for Florida with sleeping coach tickets from St. Louis, MO. We should have saved our money as we spent one of the two nights on a day coach and got no refund. Some two months were spent in Miami in medical evaluation, de-briefing, rest and recuperation, most of which was as an outpatient. At one medical evaluation session I was administered Sodium Pentathol (then known also as truth serum) by the interrogating doctor and he reported I cried like a baby. I suppose from the stress of air combat. Although Inabelle was only allowed to stay for a month, this was a glorious time for me and was really our **“Lost Honeymoon”** we never had time for when we were first married. We were assigned barracks accommodations at the Patrician Hotel, a Miami Beach ocean front hotel with private room and bath. Ours was a room that faced another hotel and about the center of the building. This room location prevented us from getting any cooling ocean breeze and made the room quite hot. There was no such thing as air

conditioning, except in the luxury hotels, and much of the cooling was done by large fans blowing through a large storage room filled with ice and piped through the heating ducts. We had daily room inspections, usually done by a "90 Day Wonder Shave-Tail" 2nd Lt., with demerits given out if our room did not pass. I recall we were out when one inspection was pulled and our room received some demerits. A list was left on the bed showing the demerits, a dirty shower stall was one. When we returned and Inabelle saw the list she was furious and immediately called on the inspector and contested his findings. From that day on he was wary when he made his inspections of our room. This was my most enjoyable time of my military career. We had lots of time to spend together, beachcombing, swimming in the hotel pool or the Atlantic Ocean, or whatever we chose to do. The beach and Atlantic Ocean was our favorite past time. As previously mentioned, Bob and Dee Lanier from our crew, and Hugo Greinert and Esther, his wife was in Miami at this time also. After returning from overseas Hugo had been assigned to a base in South Carolina. He and his crew bailed out as their crippled plane could not gain altitude to make it over the Alps. They walked it into Yugoslavia and were rescued by Tito's Partisans. His plane went down, on February 25, 1944 (my 23rd. birthday) on a mission to Regensburg, Germany. Hugo was later re-assigned to Miami Beach. Morris mentions in his Diary on 1/20/44 that "Grunart," that I am certain is Hugo, as going to Lecce, where the 98th Bomb Group was stationed, with us to see Jimm and to the Red Cross. I learned later from Hugo at our 1998, 450th Reunion that one of his crew was killed and one captured and interned. The group of refugees he was with were rescued and returned to the Manduria base after sixty-eight days. Being refugees, they were continually on the move to avoid being caught by the Axis Army. An ATC C-54 picked them up at an airfield in Yugoslavia and a planeload of them was rescued. Hugo came by our barracks and we all had a great reunion, prior to his leaving for the U. S. The war was over for him. The six of us ran around together quite a lot and we had some great times together. Hugo was a fun loving guy and skinny as a "rail" but still had lost some 30 - 40 pounds during his ordeal. At Miami Beach he was always kidding his wife, who was somewhat flat chested, about stuffing oranges in her Bra to fill it out. As I recall, he was still there when we left. Bob and I probably left at about the same time but I do not know where he was re-assigned. I do recall they had to wake him up to release him from the hospital. Upon completion of my R & R evaluation of some six weeks, I was re-assigned to what is now Ellington Army Air Base at Rapid City, SD. For this transfer, I received another ten-day delay-enroute for the move and headed for Mansfield by train where I picked up Inabelle and our old 1940 Chevy and we headed for Rapid City. I had saved enough gas ration stamps for this purpose, as well as stamps for rationed foods. Nearly all foods were rationed during the war with sugar, meats, shortening and canned goods all being rationed and in short supply.

09/20/44. Arrived in Rapid City about this date on a cold wintry, snow spitting day. As married NCO's were allowed to live off base, we found a basement room in a private home as temporary quarters and watched rental ads in the local newspaper for apartments with cooking privileges. After a couple of weeks we located, through a co-worker at the base, a one bed room apartment at Snyder's Motel renting for \$65.00 per month. This was pretty steep rent for my income so we stayed there for about three months. The motel rooms had been converted with cooking privileges and when one was vacated we moved

to one of these and spent next several months here at \$30.00 per month. This enjoyable period of time for us as we were only some thirty miles from Mt. Rushmore and closer still to Laurel Lake, built by the CCC boys back in the 1930's. The lake was up in the mountains, was a good fishing spot and in a really beautiful setting. We would go there on our days off, take a picnic lunch with another couple, Gail and Virginia Little, living in the court and fish for croppies. If the fish were biting, we two men spent all our time taking fish off the and re-baiting the hooks for the women. A small hank of cotton was the best bait

I commuted to the Air Base by Army bus and worked in the control tower as radio contact instructor with training air crew radio operators flying B-29's. The tower had about a dozen cubicles with radio receivers and transmitters with code keys and "Bugs" for flight training use. A "Bug" is a high-speed code key that could transmit at about three or four the speed of a regular key at around 35 code segments per minute. If my memory is correct, this was a B-29 training base when we first arrived. During my assignment there it was in the process of training a Group of P-61 "Black Widow" twin tailed night fighter-bomber. This plane was similar in design and looks to the P-38 with twin tail booms, painted black and was built for nighttime raids and carried a crew of two. I do not believe it ever became operational in combat as the war ended by the time the first units were fully trained.

Some time around March, 1945, I was granted emergency leave for major surgery that my father was to undergo at a Springfield, MO hospital. We drove our old Chevy back to Kansas City Missouri, with a pregnant friend, Mildred Marcellus and Kermit, her small daughter, and put her on a train to Shreveport, LA where she and Johnson, her husband had lived. We left the Chevy at Mansfield and returned to Rapid City by Bus. We had given up our room at the motel, but found an efficiency apartment with a Murphy bed in an apartment house just off down town and spent the balance of our time at Rapid City there.

In June, 1945, I requested and was approved for advanced radio school at Tinker Army Air Base, Oklahoma City, OK. By this time the war had ended in Europe and the nation was gearing up for a final push on Japan. At the time, it was being rumored on the base that we were being prepared for assignment to the Pacific Operation upon completion of training of the Black Widow Group. I was not looking forward to this as I felt my luck had stretched to its limit in Italy and re-assignment to Tinker was a possible way out. When I transferred to Tinker, Inabelle went home to Mansfield. My assignment at Tinker was effected sometime in mid-July, 1945, and after a month or so there, the first Atom Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan August 7, 1945, and two days later another dropped on Nagasaki and the war formally ended in Japan and the Pacific on August 14, 1945. I never finished radio school.

When the war ended in Japan on August, 14, 1945, the nation began to muster out its military. Discharge was made on a point system. As I recall, one need 100 points to be eligible for earliest release. Points were earned, as follows: Length of service - one point per month; overseas service - 2 points per month; medals and commendations - 5 points each. Those with 100 points or more were released first. After the first release, points needed dropped to 95, and by 5 point increments until all were released. As I recall, I had earned 86 points by then, as follows: Service time - 41 points; Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters - 30 points; Purple Heart - 5 points; Two Distinguished Unit Citations - 10

points. Total - 86 points. In late August or early September, 1945, I was transferred to the 379th AAFBU (T), Coffeyville AAF, Kansas as my mustering out staging area from service. From Coffeyville, back to Jefferson Barracks for final discharge on September 6, 1945. **And thus ends my active service time with the U. S. Army Air Force.**

SERVICE DATA:

Beuford Leroy Lowrance SN 37397918

Place of entry into service: Jefferson Barracks, MO

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and No.: Radio Operator AAF #756

Battles and Campaigns: Air Offensive Europe; Naples; Foggia; Rome and Arno Campaigns.

Air Medal with 6 OLC's (Oak Leaf Clusters) One was never received. An OLC was given for each five actual missions credited with no extra credit for double count mission. I had thirty-nine actual missions by single count and eleven uncompleted missions for which no credit was given. My missions totaled 50 as six of them counted double.

Presidential Citations: (Distinguished Unit Citation.) [DUC] Two issued to the 47th Air Wing, which included out 450th Bomb Group.

Purple Heart April 24, 1944.

Good Conduct Medal

Sharp Shooters Medal

OVERSEAS SERVICE:

Date of Departure: December 5, 1943.

Date of arrival to AMETO Manduria, Italy: January 1, 1944.

Date of Departure AMETO, Manduria, Italy: June 14, 1944.

Date of arrival USA: July 10, 1944

DATE CREW MEMBERS COMPLETED MISSIONS:

05/25/44. Clark and Lowrance

05/26/44. Bob Lanier?

05/27/44. Caldwell, Kahan, Place, and Stansell.

05/29/44. Neither Morris nor I have the date Gleason and Anzo finished. For some reason this dates comes to mind, but am not at all certain as to its correctness. Jimmy Gleason is listed as one of eight Flight Leaders for this date in my S-2 Narratives. The Mission was Weiner-Neustadt, Austria - Vollersdorf Airdrome. On 5/30/44 S-2 Narratives under (Toni Gayle) Two 109's made an individual attack each from rear, level.

“COTTONTALES:”

TONI GAYLE - Was the name of Pilot Clarence B. (Babe) Caldwell's infant daughter, born July 19, 1943 and died from Polio on August 19, 1945. Her lifetime was short as was that of her namesake. Toni Gayle, the B-24 Liberator went down on June 26, 1944, less than one month after the last of her original crew had completed their missions.

In June, 1996, I received word from Morris Clark as to the final fate of Toni Gayle. In reading the second of his three 450th Bomb Group History Books, he noticed an article written by Rolland G. Pearce had sent it for publication in the History book. I only got the first book as it covered my time in Italy, January through May 31, 1945. Rolland and his crew were assigned to “a beat up old B24 named Toni Gayle”. (his description.) Rollie was Radio Operator and Ball Gunner on the Toni Gayle when she went down on what they thought would be a “Milk Run” on a mission to Vienna, Austria. A fatal burst antiaircraft fire hit them and the plane went into a dive. The Ball Turret inter-com had been knocked out over Ploesti two days before and not yet repaired. The crew was unable to notify him of the impending situation. He was unaware the entire crew had already bailed out but they had gotten the turret cranked up so he could escape. Rollie had apparently passed out from lack of oxygen and came to at a lower altitude when a miracle happened. The plane leveled out for a brief moment and he was able to tumble out the rear hatch of the burning aircraft. German soldiers captured him and interned at Stalag Luft IV later transferred on the Black March to Stalag 357. His weight dropped to 90 pounds. He was to find out later through the Red Cross that the rest of his crew had parachuted to safety some 25 to 30 miles away and they were also interned. On April 16, 1945, the British 7th Division arrived and he was rescued and returned to the United States. He was discharged from service September 26, 1945 and now lives in Mesa, Arizona. He is afflicted with Parkinson's Disease, an ailment that causes tremors of the body, particularly the hands with a shuffling, bent forward gait and affects both mental and physical capabilities. It is very similar to my affliction of Essential Tremor, which is now thought to be an inherited condition. Some health care specialists have diagnosed my problem as Parkinson's also, and I have been treated with the same medications but with no satisfactory relief. There is no cure for either disease and medications are limited in relief of the condition but do make for a better quality of life that is of some help. Since we were both R. O.'s on the same plane I feel a kindred spirit with Rollie so I wrote to him and sent some information of our crew and Toni Gayle. I later received a letter from his son, Roger L. Pearce saying that Rollie's health has deteriorated to the point where he can no longer write. He requested further information on the 450th Bomb Group for a book Rollie was working on and Roger will try to complete. A rough copy of this missive

has been mailed to Roger but to-date, late June, 1998. I have had no response. Perhaps I will hear from him later.

I recently received a letter dated June 14, 2000, from Sam Stein, 450th Bomb Group membership Chairman, in which was a copy of a letter Roger L. Pearce had written to Sam concerning his father. This letter stated that Rolland G. Pearce died on December 23, 1998. In the letter he requested that Sam notify all that his father had died and he was receiving letters from the 450th and ex-POW's and it was somewhat painful for him to answer them. He said his father had never really recovered from the War. Toni Gayle was hit by a burst antiaircraft fire and went down on his 12th mission. He spent a year at Luft Stalag concentration camp, and the privations of the Black March across Germany left him deeply troubled. When he died, he believed he was flying a mission until he became comatose. Roger stated "World War II was never over in our home". So this adds the final story for those who flew the "**Toni Gayle**".

It is gratifying to know that Toni Gayle, one of the five surviving aircraft of the original 15 planes of the 722nd Squadron, had gone down without the loss of life of any of its crew members that had flown her. A fitting tribute to a gallant plane: A true **LIBERATOR**. During our approximate five months of combat flying, from January 8, through the end of May, 1944, with the 722nd Squadron. Of the original fifteen planes and sixteen crews we had casualties of twenty-two planes and crews lost. Of the original 170 combat crewmen of the 722nd Squadron, only fifty-five reportedly completed their missions. It was reported the 722nd had the lowest casualty rate of the entire 450th Group. Of the thirty-nine individual combat missions I flew, we also made eleven turn-back missions for a variety of reasons. The rest of the crew made three more turn-backs while I was grounded during my flak injury and hospitalization. The Fifteenth Air Force combat crews were required to complete fifty missions for their tour of duty but sometime after the 450th Group completed their duty assignment, this number was reduced to thirty-five. While the Eighth Air Force, flying from England, only had to complete Twenty-five. Their number, too, was raised to thirty-five missions, possibly at the same time. In all fairness, however, theirs were the more dangerous targets, such as Berlin, which was beyond our range. Ours, however, were the longest.

Quite often after a mission on the way to our home base many of the crew would assemble on the flight deck. To relieve the tension of the time we would joke and carry on, sometimes singing "bawdy songs". I recall on one return flight Babe joked that if our crew had to "ditch" he would stick an egg-beater (the old hand-crank type) up Larry's ass and use me as the propeller on the rubberized dinghy (lifeboat) which was carried aboard plane and, hopefully, got pitched out before the plane sank. Babe always called me Larry. I suppose because everyone thought my last name was pronounced Lawrence and that is whom I was known as. The correct pronunciation is two syllables, Low-rance. I never bother trying to change the pronunciation, either then or now. I had always believed the Toni Gayle to be a B-24-J Series Liberator Heavy bomber and have listed it as such in my writing. Our son, Jerry, while surfing the Internet, found a web location devoted entirely to B-24's and e-mailed me the address. In surfing this web site, I have found through serial numbers that the Toni Gayle was in the "H" series. There were primarily two series used mainly as combat aircraft at the time; the "H" and "J" and were so nearly alike most could not tell the difference. In technical terms and news write-ups, four-motor bombers were listed as the B-17(H) or B-24(H) with the "H" being referred to as

“Heavy”. The two-motor bombers, the B-25(M) and B-26(M) were (Medium) Bombers.

SO ENDS MY TALE OF THE WHITE TAIL BOMBER, B-24-H LIBERATOR TONI GAYLE:

MUSINGS: Some things seem to be seared in my memory as if placed there by a branding iron. Such as: The Flak over Ploesti, Romania, Regensburg, Germany, or Steyr, Austria, our three most dreaded targets. It seemed that the spots on 101 Dalmatians wouldn't begin to cover the number of Flak bursts laid ahead of us over the target area and the formation had no choice but to fly through it; Or the mission I earned my Purple Heart, when Toni Gayle was knocked from the formation on running into prop-wash. In a matter of seconds our plane dropped several thousand feet in altitude, lost the protection of the rest of the formation and became a lone “straggler.” Shorty Stansell and I were in the waist area position and really believed the plane had been hit and was going down, although not out of control. We had our chest packs snapped on and ready to bail out when Al Kahan called over the intercom to all stations and explained what the situation was. Had he not done so at that explicit moment we would have been “out of there”; Or the mission that Herman Goering's crack squadron of ME-109's and FW-190's came splitting through the 450th formation with every intention of wreaking havoc and causing mid-air collisions by the resulting calamity; Or the mission we could not get the prop feathered on a failed engine and the wind-milling prop blades was shaking the plane to pieces. I was sending **SOS's** (the International Distress Code) as fast as my hand could tap it out on the code key as ... --- ... and praying that someone some where was receiving my transmission and would receipt for it, and it never was. I did learn later that my signal was heard the ASR (Air Sea Rescue) had sent out search planes to find us. **SOS**, as far as I could determine, had no special meaning other than being three simple letters that were easy and fast to send. It did, however, have a meaning for our breakfast chow menu as “Shit on a Shingle“. (Chipped beef and gravy on toast.) Or the mission I raised one foot and saw a big flak hole where my foot had been. Or the time three ME-109's hit us on an E/R because of engine trouble on our return from Toulon, France alone and the Anzio Beachhead convoy patrol of British Spits saved our butts. These were harrowing times for all of us.

THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN MANDURIA?

The Italian people had little means of subsistence and life was harsh in Wartime. Many were employed at the Air Base and others occupied in farming. Those in farming lived in town and their livestock were sheltered in a lean-to on the home of the owners. The livestock would be taken to the countryside daily for grazing while field or orchard work was done. Orchards were pruned meticulously and not a twig was wasted but was taken home and used for fuel for heat and cooking. They lived as best they could under the circumstances, even to prostituting their wives, daughters and girl friends. We had just such a situation at the Manduria Air Base that opened soon after we arrived. To the right and near the far end of the Air base runway there was a small cut limestone building, perhaps the couples home, that was used for this purpose. It was reported that the husband took the money at the

entrance while the wife performed the service. At take-off on many missions, I have looked down from my seat at the radio table, just behind the co-pilot, and viewed, through the small bubble window, a long line of GI's, which resembled a chow line, as we lifted off on a mission. As I recall, this house of ill repute was there for only a short period of time as Col. Mills, our Base Commander, had it closed as soon as he was notified of its presence. To my knowledge, Shorty Stansell was the only member of our crew NCO's to use this facility. Many is the time when we would be in town and a small boy or girl would come up to us, make a circle with thumb and forefinger of one hand and stick his other forefinger through the circle and say "Ficky-fik," soliciting prostitution for an older sister or other family member. I do not know the going price but my educated guess, based on the following, is \$2.00. Some of us were visiting one Sunday in another barracks and they were having Mail Call. One of the GI's from the Bronx in New York, who had just returned from Mass and had received a letter from his wife. He opened and read the letter, pulled two \$1.00 bills and gave a big "Whoopie, my old woman just sent me \$2.00 to go to the whorehouse." Being raised in the boondocks of Missouri, I could not comprehend there being people with such morals in our world. Such was the life of a country boy unwise to the worldly ways of big city folk and, to me, their strange beliefs and customs.

LIBERATOR LORE; THE B-24 LIBERATOR, THE UNSUNG HERO OF WORLD WAR II.

Although the B-17 Flying Fortress was the "Glory" plane of the time and had the lions share of publicity from the News Media, primarily because of its sleeker appearance. It did not compare well with the B-24 Liberator, otherwise. The B-24 was first used by and got its name from the British when those who first flew it called it the Liberator. The B-17's main advantage was it could fly some 5,000 foot higher in altitude, although I have read some reports that dispute this, and was easier to handle. It was known as a flying glider. The Liberator was an ungainly looking bird and often dubbed "The Flying Box Car or Ugly Duckling," but it had versatility far beyond that of the Fortress without compare. It could fly faster and go farther, carry a heavier bomb load and they were used extensively world wide as a long range cargo carrier as the C-87. It was also used, both in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans regions, as a long range anti submarine aircraft. We could not fly in the same formation with the B-17 as they could not keep up with us. Many are the time when our B-24 formations would overtake a formation of B-17's and pass it by. More B-24's were produced than any other plane in the history of aviation and were used by the Allied Nations worldwide. It certainly was the most versatile plane of its time and, perhaps, of all time.

#The B-24 built around the "Davis wing," its inventor, David R. Davis an eccentric, self-taught designer. Davis started with a perfect sphere and then tried to create the teardrop shape formed by water falling off it. If that could be done, drag might be virtually eliminated. After years of tests, which promised spectacular results, Davis secured a patent on the formula in 1931. The wing was long and thin, quite different from the thick, broad, large wing area aircraft of the time. Wind tunnel tests by Cal Tech proved the wing plausible. Out of a theoretical efficiency of 100 percent, the Davis Fluid Foil wing

achieved 102 percent. (This test was apparently the forerunner of our present day CD {Coefficient of Drag} by which our automobiles are rated in how efficiently they slip through the air.) Bewildered by the results, scientists ran the tests several times, always with the same findings. The wing, unlike other aircraft in its day, was made in one continuous span, passing completely through the fuselage, whereas most wings attached to the side of fuselage. Davis could not visualize his wing, a marvel of its time, going into such an ungainly bird as the B-24. War needs prevailed, however, and he finally gave consent for its use.

The Liberator was built by Consolidated plants in San Diego, CA and Fort Worth, TX, with additional aircraft being built by Ford at Willow Run, Michigan, and at North American at Dallas, TX. It was built in many configurations, even as a single tail version, and saw duty worldwide and in all branches of the service. This wing was extremely flexible and would bend in an upward curve when the plane was fully loaded with bombs. I have viewed B-24's, while flying along side other planes in our formation with a full bomb load, wing tips appeared to be as much as three to four feet above the center.

CHEAPER BY THE THOUSANDS:

The B-24 was first flown in the final days of 1939, the last of the 18,842 B-24's came off the assembly line on May 31, 1945. Including variants, a total of 19,256 planes were built by Consolidated and its four major contractors. Within five years after the last B-24 was assembled, only one remained on Air Force inventory, a B-24M utilized for anti-icing research.

During the War, more than 6,000 were lost in aerial combat. Another 3,000 succumbed to accidents and other causes. Almost 6,000 were scrapped in the U. S. at an average price of \$524.00 per carcass. Two thousand, deemed no longer suitable for operational duties, were abandoned on foreign bases when the war ended, and the remainder were either cannibalized for parts or simply wore themselves out in service of their country.

The B-24 was equipped with ten 50-caliber machine guns with 4,700 rounds of ammunition. Its normal offensive bomb load for long range missions was 5,000 pounds. Maximum overload weight was 71,000 pounds. Top speed at 30,000 feet altitude was 300 MPH. Range with 5,000-pound bomb load was 1,700 miles and 2,792 planes were delivered of the "J" series.

Compared to the B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-24 Liberator had a much smaller horizontal stabilizer, and one-third less wing area. Its wing was much longer, but not as broad or as thick. Pilots who flew both claimed that the B-17 was a powered glider, while the B-24, although faster, was not as stable, particularly at lower speeds. Perhaps the key advantage of the B-17 had over the B-24, was controllability, even when damaged. Control rigging was especially important on a Liberator. If not done correctly, it was in big trouble, especially after suffering hits. Even with rudder and ailerons not fully functioning, a B-17 could be turned with its cowl flaps. It also handled well at low speeds and could fly some 5,000 feet higher than the Liberator, although some sources disagree say the B-24 could fly higher. The B-17 had a wingspan of 103 ft. 9 in. and a wing area of 1420 square feet. The B-24, with its Davis wing design, had a wing span of

110 ft. with a wing area of only 1048 square feet, or one third less than the B-17. Unit costs of the B-24 dropped from \$269,805.00 in 1941 to only \$137,000.00 by the end of 1942 and would drop even more before production was halted in May, 1945. Had the war continued the plane was scheduled to be built with a single tail.

At the time the 449th and 450th Bomb Group commenced combat duty in Italy on January 8, 1944, the 15th Air Force had only two other B-24 Groups that were active; the 98th and 376th Bomb Groups, with four groups of B-17's, the 2nd, 97th, 99th and 301st. The bombers were escorted by four fighter squadrons; three P-38's; the 1st, 14th and 82nd, and one P-47 squadron the 325th Squadron. The 450th was usually escorted by the 82nd P-38 squadron and occasionally by the 325th, P-47 squadron. At the time the 450th was in Manduria, Italy it was reported there was a Black Squadron of P-47's pilots. They were crack flyers, too. The 332nd P-47 squadron arrived in May, 1944 and it may have been this Squadron as I do not remember hearing of them early on in our missions. We also had P-51 Mustangs as escorts that began arriving in late March or early April, 1944. The Mustang had a longer range but was lighter in armament, being armed with only two 50 caliber chin guns and three 30 caliber guns on each wing.

<It will never be known what happened to all the 450th Airmen who died and are missing in action. Our National Cemetery in Florence, Italy is only one of the many National Cemeteries that are located in Italy. The graves registration office in Arlington, VA, lists the names dead and missing at the Florence Cemetery by name, rank, state, and date of each killed or missing by Squadron of the 450th Bombardment Group as follows: 720th, 28; 721st 28; 722nd, 45; 723rd, 27. The Florence National Cemetery is only one of the many National Cemeteries located in Italy where veterans of the 450th are buried. The National Cemetery at Anzio, Italy is one such cemetery and all of the original 450th Bomb Group Air combat men were there for the Anzio Beachhead landing and subsequent defense thereof. It is the intention of the 450th Bombardment Group (H) Association to list those buried in other Italian National Cemeteries as they become available.

This writer has used a different system of typing that probably will go unnoticed by most readers. My former system of typing was the "Columbus System - Hunt'n Land." The new improved version is the "Slick Willie Bimbo version - Hunt'n Pecker", and is used throughout this document.

KEY:

< Indicates information taken Robert A. Davis' 450th History Book No. 1 - S-2 Narratives.

Indicates information taken from The December, 1991, Volume 26, Issue of Wings.

>Indicates information taken from **THE 15th AIR FORCE STORY**, By Ken C. Rust.

^ Indicates information taken from May, 1998 Issue of **COTTONTALES**.

*" Indicates information is from the War Diary of Morris B. Clark, to whom I am deeply

indebted for its use as my War Diary was sketchy, at best, because of its size. About 2 ½ x 5”, with seven days for each page there was not a lot of space for information.

() Indicates information supplied from memory, which may or may not be entirely accurate, but is as I recall it.

LEGEND:

- AF - Air Force.
- AMETO - Adriatic-Mediterranean European Theater of Operations
- ATC - Transport Command
- AWOL - Absent without leave
- BG - Bomb Group
- EM - Enlisted Men
- CBI - China-Burma-India (Theater of Operations.)
- CO - Commanding Officer
- CQ - Charge of Quarters
- D-Day - Normandy Beachhead Invasion date April 6 1944
- Demo. - Demolition Bomb
- DUC - Distinguished Unit Citation
- E/R - Early Return
- ETO - European Theater of Operations
- Frag. - Fragmentation Bomb.
- GI - Government Issue, all-inclusive including personnel.
- GP - General purpose bomb
- I.P. - Initial Point - Mission turning point on heading for target.
- M/Y - Marshaling Yard
- N/C - Non counting mission
- NCO - Non Commissioned Officer
- Mayday - International Distress Voice Call.
- M/Y - Marshaling Yard.
- OCS - Officers Candidate School (Where one became a “Shave Tail”)
- POE - Port of Embarkation.
- RO - Radio Operator.
- R & R - Rest and Recreation
- Shave Tail - Newly commissioned 2nd Lt., fresh out of OCS.
- S/D - Stay Down on scheduled mission for weather or various and sundry reasons.
- SOS - Morse code International Distress Call Signal.
- T/B - Turn Back on a scheduled mission.
- VIP - Very Important Persons (or Personnel).

It is my hope this War Diary will be found interesting to those who may have occasion to read it as this was WAR as we lived it and as it was recalled from my memory. Again my thanks to Morris Clark for allowing me to use excerpts from his diary and other information’s he has so graciously contributed.

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