

Flight Log and Diary of
Vernon A. Wilk, 1st Lt.
15th A.F. 720th Bomb. Sqd. Crew #200
B-24 Bomber Plane (10 man crew)
Feb/ 1943 Active Service Age 19
Aug/ 1944 Sent overseas Age 20
Apr/ 1945 Home and discharge Age 21

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Fresno, California | Basic I |
| Reno, Nevada | University |
| Santa Ana, California | Basic II - Cadet Training |
| Kingman, Arizona | Gunnery School |
| Victorville, Calif. | Bombardier School |
| Fresno, California | Crew Assignment |
| Walla Walla, Wash. | B-24 Bombardier Training |

For Bruce, Denise, and Keith

Copied by Joan V. Wilk
3 - 24 - 1992

GMT = Greenwich Meridian Time

August 12 - 18 Hamilton Field, Calif.

August 18 - 20 Arrived Friday P.M. Departed Sunday A.M.
Kingman, Arizona

August 20 - 21 (overnight) Dyersburg, Tennessee

August 21 - 25 Arrived Mon.P.M.; Departed Fri. A.M.
Manchester, N.H. (Greener)

Aug.25-Sept.9 Arrived Friday P.M.; Departed Fri. 0840 GMT
Gander Field, Newfoundland

Sept.9-Sept.10 Arrived 1625 GMT; Departed 0940 GMT
Lagens AAF, Azores (Terriera Island)

Sept. 10-Sept.11 Arrived 1550 GMT; Departed 0704 GMT
Marrakech, French Morocco; saw Africa
1515 GMT over Safi; altitude - 9,000 ft.

Sept.11-Sept.12 Arrived 1310 GMT; Departed 1015 GMT
(5,000 ft.) Tunis, Tunisia; via Meknes,
Oran, Algeria, Phillippeville

Sept. 12 Arrived 1340 GMT - Gioia, Italy; Departed
via Porto Bello and Catania, Sicily, and
Taranto, Italy. Got our first lesson in
Italian in town. Very interesting to say the
least.

Sept. 16 Arrived about noon. Manduria Air Field

MISSIONS

(1) Sept. 23 *OR 944 200 got record* Ora Bridge in Northern Italy . Saw first
flak coming home 10 miles south of Bolzano

(2) Oct. 3 Brenner line (Bolzano, Italy) Flak bursts
100 yds. at 2 o'clock

(3-4) Oct.7 Vienna Winterhaven Oil Refinery. Flak looked like
a black polkadot dress. One flak hole between
wing tip and No.4 engine (6 inches across)
Rudman and I went halves on one flak suit so
we crawled inside our flak helmets. Target lo-
cated S.E. Vienna on the Danube River.

M/Y = Marshalling Yard

- Oct. 9 Was sworn in as a Second Lt. today. Capt. Stevens Sdq. C.O. read the oath. Sgt. Bishop pinned on the golden bar and took the initialed blue one.
- (5) Oct. 10 Padua Marshalling Yards. Our group did not reach 1.P. or target due to cloud coverage
- (6) Oct. 11 Krugen Oil Refinery Reached Yugo-Austro border. Very bad weather necessitated an early return. Point of turning was on a line between Zagreb and Graz. Target was located in the north section of Vienna.
- (7) Oct. 13 Friday the thirteenth-Bombed Bannhida M/Y halfway between Gyor and Budapest. Flak was light and inaccurate.
- Oct. 14 McKone left us day! That's all.
- Oct. 15 Stand down
- (8-9)Oct. 16 St. Valentin Tank Works. Flew with our new 1st Pilot for the first time and what a difference. Target halfway between Linz and Steyr. Navigator in lead ship got lost and the result was probably bombs strung out all over Austria. Probably came closer to Vienna than Linz. Flew number 3 position. Altitude indicated was 25,000 with a temperature of -35°C (-28°F.) Saw the Alps from both sides.
- October 18 Had an early return on a raid to Saurweke Ordnance Plant in Vienna. No. 4 engine run away and could not be feathered at 16,000 ft. about 2 hrs.20 minutes from base. Jettisoned 8-500 lb. bombs 20 miles North of Viz in Adriatic.
- October 21 Flew to Fulcanaro Field, just west of the Italian spur. Crew with us was to pick up a plane. Other pilot got plane stuck while taxiing. Spent all afternoon there and took off at

1944

- Oct. 21(cont'd) 1600 in a rain. Gas started pouring down into bombay so we turned around, landed, and stayed overnight.
- October 22 Took off from Falcanaro about 1300 and arrived Manduria 15:30
- (10) Oct. 23 Brenner Pass. Six miles below Austro-Italian border. Very heavy cloud coverage. Did a 180 and bombed a small town about 10 miles south of target.
- October 29 Headed for Munich. Bad weather split boxes up causing early return.
- (11) Oct. 31 Inspection in the morning. Briefed at 10:00 AM for mission to Podgrica, Y~~u~~goslavia near Albanian border. Aiming job was center of town; turned around once and just before hitting coast of Italy did a 180 and returned to fly over target area & complete cloud coverage. No bombs dropped again.
- (12-13) Nov. 4 Target was the Munich West M/Y. Took off at 6:45 and hit the target at 11:46. Bombed by PFF due to cloud coverage, so results are unknown. Two bombs hung up on the stations - one of them a delay action bomb. So I was back in the catwalk with a screwdriver, at 20,000 with doors open. I managed to force them out. We landed at Foggio for gas on the way back. Flak was heavy, but not too accurate.
- (14) Nov. 6 Mission to Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. We changed ships three times. Target was 10/10 covered. Formation flew around for nearly an hour, drew light but accurate flak, and finally headed for home with bombs. I believe I've put more pins back in bombs than bombs I've dropped. Yugo is very Mountainous with little farming from observations.

1944

- (15) Nov. 7 Mission to Brenner Pass target was the same as the 23rd of Oct. Could not bomb briefed target, but did bomb a M/Y South of it. Pattern was very good and hits caused smoke and flame to belch up very high.
- (16-17) Nov. 17 Mission to Floresdorf Oil Refinery, North Vienna. Temperature dropped to -45°C . Took off at 06:30 bombs went away at 11:45. Cloud coverage was tenths so PFF took over. I saw some white flak for the first time besides the black. We Jettisoned two bombs (delayed) in Adriatic because of gas & engine trouble. No. 4 went out just after bombs away. We struggled over Yugo, Viz, & the Adriatic and set down at San Severo just as No. 1 engine ran dry. We did alot of sweating today, believe me! One flak hole 5" wide in the right aileron and a small one in the bomb bay fuel tank. Walt made a swell 2 engine landing.
- (18) Nov. 18 Mission to Aviano Airdrome near the town of Rovereto in Piano. Carried 40 100lb. bombs. We got heavy and accurate flak at Udine, turned left leaving the formation and went around Trieste. Met the box on the spur. Getting flak unexpectedly is enough to make anyone sweat blood.
- (19) Nov. 20 Doboij R.R. bridge was today's target. German troops evacuating Yugoslavia must use this bridge. We hit the target at 11:57. Our box missed the bridge due to C-1 trouble in the leadship. Results seem doubtful. Bomb load was 6 - 1,000 lb. ers. No flak!! Take off - 09:00 Landed 13:45
- (20) Nov. 21 Walt Kmen finished up today on a scheduled mission to the Doboij R.R. bridge. We missed it yesterday. Took off at 11:00 and our box, X-2, hit a frontal system near Sarajevo. We spread out and lost each

1944

- (20) Nov. 21
(cont'd) other, turned back, and headed home. Clouds covered the ground entirely and found ourselves over Albania so we dropped down to 1800 ft. and crossed the Adriatic. Landed around 15:30.
- (21) Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Day. Haines flew as co-pilot to to break in a pilot today! Got stuck just before takeoff but caught the formation just out over San Vito. Target was Brod Hwy. Bridge. Unable to bomb it we went on a tour of Yugoslavia looking for alternate A. We missed the Zenica R.R. Bridge, the bombs dropping just on the approach to the bridge. Original target time was 10:07; actual time was 11:30. Received Air Medal today! Turkey for supper!
- (22-23) Dec. 2 Scheduled mission to Vienna. Takeoff at 0800. We were 1 hr. 25 min. inland in Austria when No. 1 engine blacked out. We turned around on a reciprocal heading, because the navigator was lost. 40 minutes from the target-Strasdorf M/Y N.E. of Vienna, we drew flak. Fighters were in the area, and our interphone was out. All this, straggling back over Austria and Yugo. Jettisoned the incendiaries in the Adriatic off Viz. At first, we weren't given credit, but Cobleigh bitched and today it was changed.
- (24-25) Dec. 6 Flew to Sopron, Hungary. Clouds under us all the way up. Over the target they scattered luckily. The M/Y was hit pretty well. Flame belched up from hits. The Russians are near Lake Balaton and the target was rail communications. No flak or fighters were seen by our box.
- (26-27) Dec. 15 Mission to the Rosenheim, Germany M/Y. We took off at 0815 and went over a 10/10 cloud coverage all the way. Drew flak near Salzburg which was moderate and accurate/white and black. Flight passed 10 miles left of Berchtesgarden. Rosenheim is located 60 miles S.E. of Munich and West of

1944

- (26-27) Dec. 15
(cont'd) Lake Chierron. Bombed in attack unit formation after our box mickey went out. Bombing was done by PFF although city was partly visible. Fillnow, who is our pilot now (he has three to go) flew with us today. Landing time - 1520. Bomb load was 10-500 lb'ers.
- (28-29) Dec. 17 Wels M/Y was today's target, located S.W. of Linz, Austria. Took off at 0815 and was over clouds until we hit the Alps. The target area was socked in. Garone in the lead ship had an electrical malfunction and dropped the bombs just after the 1;P. Some of us held ours and over command dropped on word from that ship. Had to salvo. No flak with exception of a few scattered bursts after starting back. Landed at 15:35. Had 10 - 500 bombs, one of which was a booby trap type. Flew in 211 and landed with all four engines. Quite an accomplishment!
- (30-31) Dec. 19 Mission to Rosenheim again. Took off at 07:30 and flew over complete undercast up to target-except over Alps. We drew flak from Munich, but it was to our left. The Mickey was too far off course. Target was socked in again. Flew No. 3 and had 10 - 500 lb. G.P. Fillnow finished up today. A Wisconsin fella - Clintonville.
- (32) Dec. 28 Brenner Pass was the target today. Flying 634 and No. 6 position, our troubles began. Five minutes from the 1.P. Bressanome, number 2 engine went out. We couldn't keep up with the formation, so turned around and tried to tack on another box. Before we knew it we made a bomb run with same box. Nix on this so we picked our way through Italy to the coast. We bypassed Udine and drew some flak at the coast. About 5 - 10 minutes over the Adriatic number 1 engine starts

Page Seven

1944

(32) Dec. 28
(cont'd)

to throw smoke and flame and Haines feathered it. (Page lost or mislaid-after about 46 yrs. excuse the lack of detail - so - onward) After throwing everything overboard of any weight, 2 engines out - and gradually losing altitude, we sighted land- crash landed at Rimini, Italy behind our lines. Spent a smashing New Year's Eve w/British personnel. Plane beyond repair. Arrived back at homebase about 2nd week of Jan.'45. Spent 1-2 weeks R & R at hotel (remote) on heel of Italy on Mediterranean Sea. Quiet & boring.

JANUARY --1945

(33-34) Jan.'45
3/51

(Page lost-partial account) -was pretty warm. The target was socked in so everything was PFF. We saw no flak until after bombs away and the left rally. The P. 38's must have helped alot with the chaff because Moosebierbaum's usually rough. There was a 60 K wind from 300° so, since we were headed South it took us only two hours to get home. We landed at 15:15. Load was 8-500 G.P.'s

NOW ON REST AND RECREATION

(35-36) Feb.7

Moosebierbaum Oil Refinery. This plant is said to produce & refine $\frac{1}{4}$ (one-fourth) of Germany's oil. We took off at 0930 and went over all the clouds today until Austria. We were notified of a 3/10 cloud coverage, but those few had disappeared when we got there. Approach was from the N.W. German smoke screen covered the target pretty fair. We did a 360 before entering flak. Came in again and dropped the 500's. Flak was HIH.

1945

- (35-36) Feb. 7
(cont'd) Someone hit the target, for black smoke was billowing up. We did some nice sharp turns, left & right to ball up the flak guns. Landed at 1655-almost dark. Flew ship No. 261, No. 3 position in Y-1.
- (37-38) Feb. 15 Matzeleinsdorf M/Y in Vienna, Austria. Took off at 0900 and flew over Viz and up, coming in on the target from 80°. The ground was visible most of the flight but the target was overcast 10/10. Flak was HM 1-A. About five bursts were around 75 ft. at 02:00. Awful black. Otherwise flak was quite scattered. Landed at 1430. 1:45 after bombs away. Flew 870 in 6 Y - 1.
- (39-40) Feb. 19 Penzing M/Y, Vienna. Took off about 0800 and went just to the right of Fiume. Target was clear and the flak was H1A. Our hydraulic system was shot out. Peeled off over the base and only the left came down, but wouldn't lock. We were very low on gas. The crank cables were cut by flak so we bailed out over the field at 3,000 ft. I was second out and landed in an orchard. The ship was 360 and we were flying No.5. Bailout time was 16:42.
- (41) Feb. 23 Verona Loco. Depot. Viz left of Pola and down on Verona, parallel to Lake Garda. Flak was H1A. A few bursts sounded like someone was throwing stones against the ship. The stuff was really close in there. We came back over Florence, over to Bari and home. Flew 231 and #2 position. 8 - 2 bomb clusters of 250's
- (42) March 2 Brescia M/Y in the Po Valley. The plan called for bombing Padua M/Y but cloud coverage prevented that. We took off at 0800 and went by way of Florence, passing to the left of Bologna. Just

1945

- (42) March 2
(cont'd) after Modena we caught some very accurate flak, picking up a few holes. One piece went in to the left of the nose wheel door. It's mine now. We could hear it going go-thump just below us. At Brescia clouds somewhat obscured the target so our box made a 180 and came in from the North. Our hits couldn't be seen. Load was 10-500. Bombs away - 12:55 and no flak at the target. Landed at 15:30
- (43) March 9 Maribor Loco. Depot was the intended target. Took off at 10:15. Passed over Viz and flew through heavy clouds. Northern Yugo was 10/10 undercast and after flying to a few alternates headed back for the base. Between Viz and the spur our box hit a snow, sleet and fog "cloud". Everyone split up. We dropped down and came out over the spur. The nose turret looked as if it had been sprayed white. Landed about 400. Flew 231, brought the 8 - 500's back. One of our planes is missing.
- (44) March 14 Briefed mission to Varazdin R.R. Bridge in Yugoslavia. Takeoff was 08:45. The primary was 10/10 covered as was Zagreb and the secondary. From a distance 40 miles we saw Zagreb flak. At this time we headed home and landed around 15:00. Ship No. was 870 with 5 - 1,000 lbs.
- (45-46) March 19 Landshut M/Y Germany. Target is halfway between Munich and Regensburg. Takeoff was 0825. Passed to the right of Ljubljana & Klagenfurt en route 1.P. Haag, was 20 miles East of Munich. Bombs away was about 1300. Arrived back at base at 17:30. Ship was 1334 and its 66th straight mission without an early return. Carried 36 100 lb-ers in clusters. No flak. Bombing Alt. was 18,000.

1945

- (47-48) Mar. 20 Target - Amstettin M/Y Austria. Took off at 10:42. Route took us over Zara. Briefed target was St. Valentine Tank Works South of Linz but fog and 20,000 ft. clouds killed that. Bombs away was 14:35. Flak was nil. As yesterday M/Y is no more. Landed at 17:45. Flew 231 with 4 - 1000 lb. bombs. 18,000 B.A.
- (49-50) Mar. 23 St. Polten South M/Y in Austria. Takeoff was 0830. Executed a remote rendezvous over Cozza Isl. After a 360 on the bomb run bombs were dropped at 12:13 from 20,000. There was no flak. We flew 231 and had 36 100 lb'ers. Croghan, Bodziak and myself finished up.

HOME

Saturday
April 7

Left the 450th and flew to Naples arriving there late in the morning. We flew directly Mt. Vesuvius on the way. Were put in tents in camp west of Naples. Met Jim Wiener there. Started processing this morning. Luggage forms were taken care of this afternoon. All my records are O.K.

Sunday
April 8

Went into Naples today. It's much like Bari - only on a larger scale. Not too sharp. Saw an American movie this evening. Kueher & I finished off two bottles of champagne.

Monday
April 9

Had our pictures censored this morning and did nothing else all day.

Tuesday
April 10
Wednesday
April 11

Went to town and saw an opera with an Infantry Lt. Came back early.

Thursday
April 12

Moved to the Lerme Hotel. Used to be quite a classy place.

Friday
April 13

Got PX rations. Played a little pingpong and did nothing in general.

1945

Saturday
April 14

Shipped out today. Went by truck to the Naples dock. Staggered onto a Liberty ship the "Santa Maria". Bunks are below the water line and crowded like rats in a trap. I'm in the fourth up from the floor. Left Naples in the afternoon, sailing between the mainland and Capri. Sea is very calm. Dinner consists of one sandwich and a piece of fruit. The other two meals are better - and warm.

Sunday
April 14

What a dull life. Saw a few porpoise jumping around in the water. Reading is the big pas-time - and some cards.

Monday
April 15

Pulled into Oran this afternoon, made a few circles, joined a convoy and left. The sea is pretty rough and a strong wind is blowing. The ship is really rolling. It makes you roll from one side of your cot to the other.

Tuesday
April 16

Well I got to sleep last night and slept good. Sighted the Rock of Gibraltar at 07:15 this morning.

Wednesday
April 17

Everything is going along fine.

Friday
April 19

Oh man I woke up this morning with feathers in my stomach. The sea really got rough overnight. Didn't eat all day. Wouldn't stay put, very long. Waves splashed all over the deck and that together with the rain and gale like winds made it a sad day. Went to bed with prayer and $\frac{1}{2}$ stomach.

Saturday
April 20

Sea calmed down over night and I woke up feeling good. Ate 2 oranges and a sandwich for dinner and ate supper. I say "Let the Navy have their damn water."