

MY B24 COMBAT TOUR

by Clyde W. Phifer

Pilot.....	Ed Shimanski
Co-Pilot.....	Art Eckstein
Navigator.....	Bill Kann
Bombardier.....	Ted Kumor
Flight Engineer & upper turret gunner.....	Elwood Lucas
Radio Operator & right waist gunner.....	Ralph Peterson
Tail Gunner.....	Joe Vargo
Lower Ball Turret Gunner.....	Jerry Goldman
Left Waist Gunner.....	Harold Todd
Nose Gunner.....	Clyde Phifer

November 2, 1944

I left Bobbie in Savannah about 8:am. The troop train left Chatham Field about 6:pm. We were assigned to Pullman cars. We arrived in Mitchell Field, New York about 10:30pm November 3, 1944. Just before we got to the airport, the train went through a long tunnel, under a river. We were assigned to barracks, drew our bedding and went to bed.

We were issued new flying equipment, a 45 caliber automatic pistol, a knife, etc. also a new B24L. #44-49294. Sent a telegram to Bobbie. We all checked out our new plane. We went on a wild check flight. The officers buzzed all their homes around New York & New Jersey. We flew around the empire state building, the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, etc. . I would sure like to do that again.

November 7, 1944

Left Mitchell Field, Landed at Dow Field, Bangor, Maine, in our new plane we are sure proud of it. We are all talking about what we will name it. I wrote a letter to Bobbie. We were issued heated suits, leather jackets, an escape kit that contained a folding machete, fishing equipment, maps, etc.. I was issued a leather jacket, but while the guy was back in the stock area getting something else, a young lieutenant put my coat on and walked away with it. That was the last one they had. I never got another.

November 10, 1944

We left Dow Field headed for the unknown. We landed at Gander Field, Gander, New Foundland. For the next 22 days we were grounded by the weather. We were on constant alert to take off at any moment. We just laid around, played ping pong, pool, cards, went to the show, and griped because we couldn't get any mail from home. There was snow and ice on the ground all the time. The temperature was always around zero or below. The ice just got thicker. We took turns guarding the plane. One enlisted man had to be there around the clock.

his left palm, at the thumb knuckle and his little finger. The bullet came through the side of the ship and hit the ground behind Todd and me. It had gone between us at about three inches above our belt line. It missed each of us by only a few inches. Todd said he heard it ricochet across the field. Jerry was bleeding a lot. Pete tried to get the radio to work, but not enough power. I ran to the fire station, it was a long ways, they brought me back in the ambulance and took Jerry to the hospital. Jerry was left handed. That was the first hole in our new ship.

The next day we went into town and looked around a little. it was Saturday afternoon and everything was closed.

Sunday, December 10, 1944

Joe, Todd and I went into town. The truck stopped at the Red Cross. We left there walking just to see the town. After walking for quite a while, we realized we were on the other side of the "Casbah" from town. We had walked through the "Casbah" which was strictly off limits to all US Army personnel. We saw no signs of any kind warning us to "stay out" or "off limits" or anything, until we were on the other side. Well, the only way to get back to town was through the Casbah, if the MPs had caught us it would have been hell to pay, and the way those mean looking Arabs were looking at us had me plenty scared. So off we went right back through the center of the Casbah. We walked along streets just wide enough for three or four people to pass side by side. There was mud, water, and filth all over the streets and most of the alley like streets were covered over so they were dark and smelly. The shops along the streets were small and dirty. Some had old shoes piled in them with an old man or woman working on some of them. There were all kinds of shops, Pottery, Tin shops, etc.. We were walking along one of these filthy streets with all those mean looking Arabs staring at us (we were the only American soldiers in there) A fellow who was walking a little ways behind us said: "Hello Joe." Well, Joe says hello Joe right back at him. (Those people called all soldiers Joe, for GI Joe I guess) He spoke broken English. After telling us that we were off limits and in danger, he invited us up to see his home in the Casbah. So having nothing else to do, we went in. It was surprisingly clean. We had a glass of wine. He played some American phonograph records for us. He was going to be married in a day or so. He introduced us to his bride to be. She couldn't speak English so he wasn't careful what he said about her to us. She showed us a lot of beautiful clothes, shoes, dresses, gowns, silk under clothes, etc. that he had given to her. They all came from France. He invited us to the wedding celebration that was to start the next day. It was to be a big feast and last for several days. He said he had a new home outside of the Casbah. He then escorted us out of the Casbah to help us avoid MPs. We gave him two packages of cigarettes and went back to the base. I will never forget my trip through the Casbah.

December 11, 1944

We took off from Tunis. Jerry had his hand in a cast. We were supposed to land at Gioia, Italy, but a B24 had crashed on the runway. It was standing on its nose, with the tail high in the air. We circled the field for a while then went to Bari, Italy to land. We spent the night in the "Sad Sack" hotel. Joe slept on the floor with two blankets, I slept on a cot, but the springs went down so far in the middle that I slept in a sitting position. We talked to some guys there that had been shot down. Some had been injured. One told us about landing in the Adriatic Sea and being rescued finally after a long time in the water. They told us some horrible stories. I was ready to go back to the states.

December 12, 1944

I saw my first burst of flak on the way from Bari to the air base. They shot right over the bus and it burst out over the water. We landed at Gioia. There they took our plane and put it in a pool to be flown by everyone.

December 13, 1944

Landed in "Royal Prod" in this hole. It is 726 Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, 49th Wing of the 15th Army Air Force. The nearest town is Foggia, Italy it is twenty miles away. The day is very dark and is drizzling rain it is cold and miserable and very depressing. We were taken to our tent in the back of a truck. Someone had put in a piece of plywood for a door. It had a piece of Plexiglas about a foot square from a wrecked airplane. That was the only light that came into the tent. There were six cots and a tall man was sitting on one of them with his head in his hands. He was the lone survivor of his crew. He had just arrived from the hospital. All of the other cots had personal belongings piled on them. We had to take them to the quarter master, in the rain and draw out two blankets each for our cots. I damned near froze to death that night. Some way we were able to get another blanket the next day. The ground is so slick that your feet slip every time you take a step, even inside, all floors are covered with mud, even the mess hall. We eat from our mess kits. We wash them in large trash barrels filled with water and some kind of chemicals, then we rinse them in another barrel of water. Everyone uses the same barrels. The barrels usually have food particles floating on top of the fluids. The mess hall has dogs running in and out all the time. All the work in the mess hall is done by Italian civilians. The Italian people that live around here will do laundry for a package of cigarettes or a bar of soap.

There are several urinals placed around the area where the tents are. They are out in the open with no walls of any kind. They are clay sewer pipes protruding from the ground at about a 45 degree angle, 4 or 5 in a cluster pointing out from the center. This is a combat zone and there are no women expected, but sometimes a red cross lady drives by, and sometimes they fly in some nurses for a dance at the officers' club.

December 15, 1944

I went to two hours of school yesterday, two more today, then two more tomorrow then I will be an Armorer Gunner Spec.#612. instead of Career Gunner Spec.#611. I expect to fly my first mission in a few days. No mail yet!!!

FLIGHT TIME BETWEEN BASES

New York to Bangor, Maine.....	3 Hours.
Bangor to Gander, New Foundland.....	3 Hours and Fifty minutes.
Gander to Azores.....	9 Hours.
Azores to Marrakech.....	6 Hours and fifty five minutes.
Marrakech to Tunis, North Africa.....	5 Hours and fifty minutes.
Tunis to Bari, Italy.....	4 Hours and fifteen minutes.
Bari to Gioia, Italy.....	35 Mutes.

December 17, 1944

It is 7:25pm here. It is 12:25 noon in New Mexico where my two little girls are right now. I pulled Guard duty last night . 10pm until 2am.

December 18, 1944

I got some mail at last. The first since I left Chatham Field on November 2nd. I am really a happy boy. I just laid around and read my mail over and over.

December 19, 1944

Just rested today, and took a shower. The shower is not available all the time. It is an interesting setup, it consists of a 500 to 700 gallon tank on a hill with a pipe that goes down hill through a heating contraption and into the shower room. You pull a chain to allow the water to run through an overhead sprayhead. There is no way to control the temperature or the water pressure, you just pull the chain again to stop the water. Some times the water suddenly becomes cold, or suddenly stops altogether. I have a pair of wooden "Clacks." They are pieces of wood carved to fit the bottom of the foot with a piece of canvas across the top of the foot. They make a clacking noise when you walk. I wear only my clacks and a towel to and from the shower, which is about one fifth of a mile on a muddy trail.

Ed and Bill went to Bari, Joe and Luke went to Foggia.

December 20, 1944

Got up early today, ate breakfast, brought in some water, and filled the gas tank for the stove. We keep our water in five gallon GI cans. We have one five gallon can outside of the back of our tent. A small diameter metal tube, fastened to the bottom of the can, runs into the homemade heater. The gas pours in on some rocks in an old 88mm shell that has holes drilled all in it. It is welded to the bottom of a thirty gallon barrel. The stove pipe is made from the tin on the inside of an ammunition container. It is a pretty good stove. We get all the 80 octane gas we want. (No coupons needed.)

December 21, 1944

Our tent leaks. Joe and I went to supply and got a half of an old tent and put it over the back half of our tent. It is raining now and the tent doesn't leak yet. No more mail yet.

December 22, 1944

I was awakened this morning at 5am for my first mission. We had briefing at 5:30am to go to Brooks, Austria. They told us how many flak guns and fighters we could expect at our primary and alternate targets and the weather conditions, etc. Then I went to try to eat breakfast. I rinsed my mess kit in the barrels and started up a muddy incline to the mess hall. I slipped and fell flat on my face in the mud. The flight was canceled. We had another briefing 8:15am, we were supposed to go to Verona, in Northern Italy, but it was canceled about 9am also. My first two stand downs. I still have 35 missions to go.

December 23, 1944

No more mail yet. I am getting anxious again.

December 24, 1944

Christmas Eve. Just took it easy all day. We went to the Officer's tent and drank champagne, ate "K" ration cheese and crackers and smoked cigars. Went with Ed, Ted, Bill, Joe and Jerry to the Catholic midnight Mass.

December 25, 1944

Just fooled around all day. Just read the mission sheet. Lucas and I fly in ship #46. Ed and Joe go in #54. Bill will fly in #53 "Patches." It will be our first mission.

Mission #	<u>ONE</u>
Date:	December 26, 1944
Pilot:	Jackson
Plane number:	46
Target:	Oswiecim, Poland. Oil refinery. Near Sokol, Poland.
Take off time:	8:05am
Time of landing:	3:05pm (Bailed out in Yugoslavia.)
Quantity, size & type of bombs:	Six 500lb. Demolition bombs.
Visibility over target:	Clear as hell.
Altitude:	26,500 Feet
Temperature:	-37 degrees centigrade.
Fighters expected:	60 to 80 FW190s 40 to 50 ME 109s.
Flak guns expected:	97.

Lucas and I flew together in ship #46 today. This is the first mission for both of us. Ed & Joe flew in ship #54. Bill flew in ship #53 "Patches." The first mission for all of us.

This is a day that I shall always remember. (I am writing this on January 4, 1945.) We took off at 8:am for a place called Oswiecim, Poland. We were instructed to destroy a synthetic oil and rubber plant. We got to the target about 12:30pm at 26,500 ft. I was surprised at my own calmness. I believe we made a direct hit with our bombs. The flak was accurate as all hell. We got hit in #3 engine and in the aft part of the waist area, lots of holes in ship, but no one got hurt. Then we were out of it and I thought it was all over. Our squadron left the group formation. Just six or seven planes flying home all alone. When all at once we were over a place called "Gyor," Hungary. We were down to 17,000 ft., and they must have been tracking us for miles, because they sure had our range. We got hit pretty hard, shot out our rudder controls. We made a left turn without banking any. The ship was out of control. The C-1, or the (Auto pilot) was all set up, but it took time to get the ship under control again, by that time we were going through the flak again. I saw two B24s go down. Our pilot, Jackson, did a good job. By this time the formation was away ahead of us, we just had 2 engines, and we were loosing gas fast. We caught the formation, but Luke was checking the gas and said that we could not make it home, so we left the formation again and headed for "Vis," an island off the coast of Yugoslavia. Luke kept checking the gas, then he saw that we couldn't make it to "Vis." So the Navigator started looking for a place for us to bail out. I got out of the nose turret, grabbed my

parachute and went back to the waist area. I did not think that we would bail out, I was pretty sure that we would land someplace in a friendly airport, so I left my escape kit in the nose area. On the way to the back I noticed that the ship had holes all over it. It was just a miracle that no one got hurt. I will never understand it.

I started back up to the nose to get my escape kit and GI shoes but Mal, the other engineer, motioned me back and said we were going to jump any minute. So I left them in the plane.

Larry Procknow, the ball turret gunner, had the back hatch open and was sitting there with ear phones on waiting for the word to bail out. When the word came, he just rolled out, then Doyle, the tail gunner, then Wally, the Bombardier, then it was my time to go. I sat down at the edge of the door, I was facing aft with my feet hanging out, then made the fatal mistake of looking down. It was 12,000 feet to the ground, and nothing but silk to hang on to. Clyde Fuqua, the Radio operator from Amarillo, Texas, had jumped twice before. He laid his hand on my shoulder. It kinda seemed to help me get my nerve, so out I went. The wind hit my feet and started me tumbling over and over. I stretched out my arms and legs and stopped tumbling. I was facing the sky and it seemed like I was lying on something softer than you could ever imagine. I felt so free. Everything was so quiet.

The navigator had talked to us over the intercom. He told us a lot of things like we were over enemy territory and would be captured and how we should conduct ourselves, etc. He was very good. I waited for about a week to pull my rip cord because I didn't want to be floating too long up there and be a good target. When I pulled my rip cord, nothing happened. I looked at my chute and started to pull the chute out. Just then it came out and hit me in the face real hard. When it opened, my head hit my back. Boy what a jolt!! Then I started to swing real high back and forth. I thought I was going to go over the top and collapse the chute. I had pulled my ripcord too soon, I was still way up in the sky. I started to sweat out my landing, I thought about church steeples, telephone poles, barbed wire fences, all sorts of things even nice soft hay stacks. I heard gun shots while I was probably two hundred or so feet from the ground.

I landed in a level, muddy pasture. The wind was in my face, and although I had my knees bent and was ready to go forward on my shoulder and roll, I was slammed onto my back very hard. I was knocked unconscious. I don't know how long I was out, but when I awoke, I heard voices all around me. I opened my eyes and saw that the people had a red star on their caps. That meant that they were "Partisans" and our friends. I tried to raise my head, but found that I couldn't, my neck had been injured when the chute opened, and again when I hit the ground. When I moved they all became very quiet. I said "Americano!" They all smiled and so did I!!

I rolled over on my stomach, and got to my feet. One woman handed me a liter of water. I was real thirsty, but when I started to drink, I discovered that it was clear white wine. Sure did taste good. I tried to hand it back but she made me keep it. Some of the women had gathered up my parachute, and were looking at the silk and wrapping it around themselves and laughing. I motioned that they could have it. They divided it up right there. Then a group of men dressed in uniforms came up and took me by the arm. I started to go with them. The two groups started to argue and have fist fights. The women were making it very clear that I should not go with the men in uniforms. So I went with the group that

had originally found me. They took me to a small town about two miles away called DRNIS, Yugoslavia. Then upstairs in an office building I found the rest of the guys. At that point I gave my 45 caliber pistol and shoulder holster to the leader of the group. I drank that wine on the walk to town and was feeling pretty good by the time I got there. I had left my GI shoes in the plane, I had to wear my big old flying boots, the mud clung to them, my feet were very large and heavy. I had injured my right knee while carrying two five gallon cans of water for our tent, my foot slipped in the mud and the can hit the outside of my knee, it hurt the inside of my knee really bad. It swelled up pretty big. I injured it again when I hit the ground. My neck hurt pretty bad too. My walk into town was pretty painful. The wine helped. There were two other groups in Yugoslavia at that time that would have either killed us or turned us over to the Germans. I am not sure of the spelling, but they were the Chetnicks and the Estashas. (That is the way they were pronounced.) We were very fortunate to have been rescued by the Partisans

Malcolm was taken to the hospital. He had landed in a ditch and broke his leg. The Pilot, Jackson, landed between two rocks and sat down pretty hard on one of them. They are still in Yugo.

Dan Popovic (h), described as similar to the "Vice President of the County," seemed to be in charge. He spent about 20 years in the United States and could speak pretty good English. The President was out of town, so he was the big shot. All the guys saluted him and stood at attention when they talked to him. All the guys saluted us when we walked down the streets. We would just smile and wave.

They took us over to a house and we had supper. For drinks we had wine. Our dessert was hot cakes rolled up, they were slightly sweetened. Then we went to one of their Government offices. They had our beds all made. One blanket each already spread out on the floor. (A very hard marble floor.) They gave us each a new US Army overcoat to cover up with. So we slept pretty good. Comfortable too. Ha.

We were constantly under guard by at least one guard, sometimes three or four. They were young men and women, some boys looked to be as young as 12 years old. They were very serious and firm with us. They had ammunition belts from their shoulders slanting across their chests and backs. With hand grenades hanging from them also. In addition to a side arm, they had a wire handle automatic rifle. Dan Popovic told us that they were protecting us, but we could only go where they escorted us and then we had to stay together. Dan said there were snipers around that would like to shoot us if they got the chance. I guess you could say we were in protective custody. Custody for sure.

December 27, 1944

We were taken to the back yard of a house where we washed our hands and face in ice cold water from a faucet in the yard without any soap. A Yugoslavian soldier gave me his towel to use after he finished with it. It was a piece of bed sheet and soaking wet. We then went into the house and ate breakfast. We had bread made from barley. One small piece was as heavy as one of our loaves. The coffee was made by scorching Barley then boiling it. It was very bitter. We had some dried figs, also red and white wine. We sat around the table talking and smoking cigarettes. I had about one and a half packs of Camel cigarettes. Luke ran out of cigarettes first, then helped me run out. The Yugoslavian cigarettes were very strong and bitter. Clyde Fuqua got some music on the radio in the house. We were taken for a walk around town. All of us had our heavy flying suits on with our heated suits on under them, with the electric cord hanging out. Some of the people would come up and feel of us

and talk to each other and look at the electric cords. I wonder what they were thinking. We were the first Americans most of them had ever seen. One man talked to us in English. He had spent some time in the US and spoke broken English. He said that he had no one to speak English with.

For dinner (lunch) we had pork chops and eggs, wine and that darn bread. Dan told us that the people around there went to a lot of trouble to get the pork chops and eggs for us, and they did not eat that well. After dinner, Dan took us to a barber shop where we had a hair cut and a shave. A 13 year old kid shaved us. He was a good barber. We had noodle soup for supper. It was darned good.

That night we slept on a marble floor again, in a different office building. This time without a blanket or an overcoat. But, this office had a rug on the floor, and they kept the stove going all night. I had a chair cushion for a pillow. A large young lady was our guard for the night. She was not fat, just big, over six feet tall. A lighted wick floated in a saucer of oil on a table in the middle of the room. One of the guys blew it out so we could sleep better. Our guard re-lit it and made it very clear that it would stay lit. Another guy moved over to a wall and sat on the floor, leaning against the wall. Again she was very stern, made him lie back down on the floor.

One night Dan had some guards take us to a building where they were having a dance. They let us look in a door for just a very brief time. They were dancing a polka. Then back to the house where we had eaten.

December 28, 1944

We had Barley cereal for breakfast. It was pretty good. But same old bread and coffee. We left Drnis, Yugoslavia about 2pm. We traveled by truck to Sibenick, Yugoslavia. We got there about dark. There were several people in the back of the truck with us. The truck had no cover over the back, and no place to sit down. It was a very rough, dirty, uncomfortable ride. We were taken to a cafe for supper. We were starved, so the goulash tasted pretty good. We had cheese for dessert.

We were then taken to a large government office. A man was seated at a desk. Guards would bring men in and they would stand in front of the desk. The man seated at the desk would ask them questions and their sentence depended on their answers. Some of the men were captured German and Italian soldiers, some were civilians. One German soldier was very rigid, snappy, smart ass type with his answers. All at once he slumped and started crying. I asked someone what happened and was told that he was told they were going to take him out and shoot him right then, and I think they did. The man behind the desk made that decision.

They separated us, and took Clyde Fuqua and me to a private home. It was a nice home, a young couple with a baby. The home was very clean, and had nice furniture. We slept on a couch that made into a double bed. Clean sheets and real pillows. I held the baby while the lady made our bed. It was probably 2 or 3 months old. They had a nice bath room, but the water and sewer lines were damaged.

December 29, 1944

We left Sebenick, Yugoslavia after dinner (lunch). We rode in another open truck. There were even more people than before. We were really packed in tight, families and their belongings, more airmen, even a German soldier. One of our guards was a boy who was probably 12 years old, he was very heavily armed and very serious. I looked at him and thought how horrible war is, he should be playing with toy guns, but his were not toys and he was not a little boy any more. The German soldier found a seat on something and one of the US Airmen, who could speak German, sat on his lap. Sometime after dark, the truck stopped in a little village and one of the young guys ran to a building and came back

with a long unwrapped loaf of bread. It was inside his shirt, next to his body. When we got underway again, he took the loaf out and began tearing pieces and handing them to us. I ate a big piece because I was starving. The big loaf lasted only seconds. It was a very cold ride, we almost froze. It was very rough riding back there, I would squat, kneel, and stand some more. We were packed pretty close, that helped with the cold, but the wind had ice on it.

We arrived about 10pm. We went to the American Mission there, and when we walked in, an American sergeant said "God Damn" more airmen, how are you boys? come on in. It really seemed good to see someone that could speak English for a change.

While in Split, Yugoslavia, I bought Bobbie a handkerchief and some pictures. We stayed two nights. We took baths, but we had no change of clothing.

The Sergeant took some of us to town in his jeep, it was a wild ride. He drove pretty fast down those narrow streets. The streets were full of pedestrians, and he never slowed at all, just honked the horn constantly. The people got out of the way just in time. We got a shave in a barbershop. A young boy applied the lather and his father shaved us. There was a young family in the shop with a little girl. I gave her a package of chewing gum. She had never seen gum before. It was fun to see her learn about it, her mother showed her how to chew it.

The Sergeant arranged for passage on a boat to Bari, Italy. The "Lujbyjanna." Maybe 100 ft. long. We had some rooms down stairs.

December 31, 1944

New Years Eve on the Adriatic Sea

We left Split, Yugoslavia (on the coast) on a Yugoslavian boat, the "Lujbyjanna" just afternoon. We docked at "Vis," an island in the Adriatic Sea. It was the island where we wanted to land, but did not have enough fuel. We went ashore with some English soldiers who had been to Yugoslavia to play professional football (soccer). Went to a movie, saw Mickey Rooney in "Blonde trouble." Then went to an English mission headquarters and ate and drank tea, wine, scotch, and all kinds of booze. We ate many kinds of cold cuts, etc. I really got plastered. I hardly remember getting back on the boat. I think I had a good time, I'm not sure. I do remember that when they sat the first big platter of food down on the table it was right in front of me but I was too slow, I reached out and the platter was empty, hands came from everywhere. When the next platter arrived, I grabbed with both hands just like the British soldiers did. The guys were really nice, but not very polite.

January 1, 1945

New years Day

I woke up about 3:30 or 4:am, we were at sea again, and I was very sick. Sea sick plus a very bad hangover. I thought I would surely die. Then I was afraid I wouldn't. I stuck my head out the port hole and fed the fish several times. We were invited to the main dinning room for breakfast with the British professional football team. My head hurt so bad and I was sick. We tried to look as good as we could. I was worried that I might not know how to conduct myself at such an important occasion. As I remember, it was about 7:30am, when we walked into the main dinning room. A British soldier said a very cheerful "Good Morning" and threw the remaining tea from his tin cup onto the floor and handed it to me to use. He told me where to find the tea and "C" rations that we were having for breakfast. We all stood around and ate the best we could.

We docked at Bari, Italy about 2:30pm. A sergeant on the dock threw us a package of "Lucky Strike" cigarettes, and talked to us as the boat was being tied up to the dock. He took us to the "Delousing" place. We were taken to a room and told to put all of our personal items in a small cloth sack and

No flak all day. Saw some in the distance. Target was an alternate. Ships were scattered all over Germany, from one to seven in a formation. Saw several columns of white smoke coming up through the clouds, bursting into large puffs at the top. Something new I guess.

February 23, 1945

Jerry's brother went back to the front lines.

February 24, 1945

The 451st Bomb Group's 200th mission. We started to skeet range, but a ship in a revetment caught fire, right on the road. We turned around and got to a safe distance and watched it burn. The guys were running from the ship. There was a terrific explosion. I think it was a 500lb bomb. There were several explosions, tires, oxygen bottles, etc. The flames went over 100ft in the air, from the gasoline. There were tracer bullets flying out from the fire, all those fifty caliber cooking off. I don't think anyone got hurt. After the explosion, we went up closer. The plane was flat on the ground. There was a 500lb bomb under the right wing tip. So we came back to the tent. It stopped burning in a couple of hours. Ed and some of the guys went out and took some pictures of the remains. The bomb that was under the right wing tip never went off.

When the planes came back from their 200th mission, they buzzed the tower and runway in formation. Guys stood in the shape of 200 with white sheets of paper on their heads. Some of the planes were so low their props nearly hit the runway.

February 26, 1945

Took off at 9:am in ship #47. Went to Yugoslavia. Made two runs over target. 18,000ft and 13,000ft. Did not drop bombs. 10-10 coverage, and target too small. Landed at 2:pm. No mission.

Mission #	<u>SEVEN</u>
Date:	February 28, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	41 "BUBBLE TROUBLE"
Target:	Bolzano Marshaling yards. Bolzano, Italy
Take off time:	7:30am
Time of landing:	2:40pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Ten 500lb bombs.
Visibility over target:	Clear over target.
Altitude:	26,500ft
Temperature:	-35 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	none
Flak guns expected:	109 Guns.

Took off at 7:30am got to target about 12:noon. Bolzano, Italy. Brenner pass. Lots of flak just before bombs away accurate as hell. One piece stuck in Plexiglas in line with my head. I have that piece of flak for a souvenir. The nose turret was damaged, and I was blown through both sets of doors into the Navigator's area of the ship. Bill's maps and papers went flying all over. The oxygen lines were cut in the nose area. Bill and I discarded our flak vests, while we were still in heavy flak, and went to the

flight deck, immediately after bombs away. My walk around bottle was empty, I got to an oxygen hose connection at the flight deck just as I was blacking out. One bomb was hung up. Bill and I dropped it using a screwdriver, standing on the catwalk with bomb bay doors open, 26,000ft and no parachute on. The bomb caught Bill's oxygen hose and almost took him with it. Ship really shot up, won't fly again for quite awhile. Flak hit iron brace by Lucas's head. Joe's goggles were broken by flak and a large hole in his turret. Ship # 45 missing. The crew bailed.

March 1, 1945

Got paid \$70.10. I am still a corporal.

Mission #	<u>EIGHT</u>
Date:	March 4, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	54
Target:	Graz marshaling yards. Graz, Austria.
Take off time:	8:15am
Time of landing:	3:30pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Eight 500lb R.D.X. bombs.
Visibility over target:	Hazy at target.
Altitude:	26,500ft.
Temperature:	-45 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	40 expected
Flak guns expected:	27 guns expected.

Joe saw eight puffs of flak. I saw none. Good mission. Very cold all day. All crew flew except Ted & Todd.

Mission #	<u>NINE</u>
Date:	March 8, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	53 PATCHES
Target:	Hegyeshalom, Hungary Rail yards.
Take off time:	7:55am
Time of landing:	2:45pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Eight 500lb bombs.
Visibility over target:	Clear.
Altitude	21,000ft.
Temperature:	-33 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	None
Flak guns expected:	None

65th mission for "Patches." No flak. No fighters. Hit bad propwash while we were rendezvousing over Adriatic Sea. Another group flew in front of us at our altitude. When we hit their propwash we did a 100 degree bank to the left and swept across the formation, barely missing two other ships, then

nosed almost straight down, then pulled out. A perfect job by Ed and Art. I thank God they were our pilots. I was sitting in the nose turret watching the Adriatic sea coming up fast, my blood was forced to my feet by the "G" force when we pulled out. We had a full load of bombs and fuel. Ed and Art said they both had their feet on the instrument panel and pulled with all their might.

Major Pierson came in our tent while we were gone and went through all of our personal things. He had them scattered all over the floor in the mud. I don't think he had the right to do that unless we were present at the time. I was very angry and still am. Everyone called him "Bugs Bunny." I don't think that he was very well liked by anyone.

March 9, 1945

Just took it easy. Went to a show, saw Eddie Cantor in "Show business."

March 10, 1945

Stand down. Ship #50.

Mission #	<u>Ten</u>
Date:	March 12, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	55
Target:	Florisdorf, Austria. Oil refinery near Vienna.
Take off time:	9:05am
Time of landing:	2:45pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Eight 500lb. bombs.
Visibility over target:	10-10 Cover at target.
Altitude:	24,000ft.
Temperature:	-38 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	40-50 (Few sighted)
Flak guns expected:	325 guns.

Lots of flak, but off to left and in front. A P-51 shot down an enemy fighter plane right over the target. I had two ME262 jet fighter planes in my gun sights, then I saw 4 P-51's coming down from my left, I held my fire. The P-51's shot them down right under us.

Mission #	<u>ELEVEN</u>
Date:	March 14, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	55
Target:	Wienerneustadt, Austria 40 mi. south of Vienna.
Take off time:	8:45am
Time of landing:	2:45pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Eight 500 lb. bombs.
Visibility over target:	10-10 Cover at target.
Altitude:	20,000 ft.
Temperature:	-30 degrees C.

Flak guns expected:

Several. Light and heavy.

79th. mission for Patches. Mission was of utmost secrecy. It was in direct support of the British 8th Army drive. The I.P. was marked by smoke screens in line from beach to target. Large white "T"s all along front lines, two miles ahead of it, 16x100 yards. Friendly flak all along our front lines at 15,000ft. Red neon signs, large fires, and yellow smoke screens. All so we wouldn't miss the target. After bombs away, I saw several flashes of artillery fire. I guess they really started going, as we were the last bombers over the target. Inaccurate enemy flak at target. No fighters.

Mission #	<u>SIXTEEN</u>
Date:	April 10, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	53 Patches
Target:	Near Bologna, Italy
Take off time:	9:42am
Time of landing:	2:30pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	120 Fragmentation bombs.
Visibility over target:	Clear
Altitude:	20,000ft.
Temperature:	-25 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	Always possible.
Flak guns expected:	Several. Light and heavy.

80th MISSION FOR "PATCHES."

Same crews, same planes, and the same mission as yesterday. As we were rendezvousing I saw a lot of C47's in formation. I think they were paratroopers, and by now they are probably on the ground and really going to town. I hope we helped them a lot. The war is looking good. Maybe I will be back with Bobbie and Clyrene and my other loved ones soon.

April 12, 1945

A day that will go down in history and be remembered for many years to come. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died today at age 63, at 4:30pm in Warm Springs, Georgia of a stroke while having his picture painted. His last words were "I have a terrible headache." He was in office since 1932. He was born January 30, 1882. He was the 31st President of the United States of America. He has been President since I was 12 years old.

Vice President Harry S. Truman took over. He is 61 years old. Born on May 8, 1884. He is from Independence, Missouri. He plays the piano.

(A note that I added later. Truman re-elected in 1949 with Albin Barkley of Florida, over Thomas A. Dewey, (Rep) and Henry Wallace, (Progressive Party).

Mission #	<u>EIGHTEEN</u>
Date:	April 9, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	45

Target:	Abisio Bridge. South of Bolzano, Italy.
Take off time:	7:15am
Time of landing:	2:15pm
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Eight 500lb bombs plus one leaflet bomb.
Visibility over target:	Clear
Altitude:	24,000ft.
Temperature:	-25 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	40 to 50
Flak guns expected:	22

Flak heavy, accurate altitude, but off to each side and in front. A colonel from the 49th wing headquarters, an air inspector, rode with us as an observer. He brought along a thermos of coffee. When he opened it, there was coffee all over the cockpit. It froze as soon as it hit. He didn't get to drink any of it. He was a swell guy.

April 22, 1945

I just asked Jerry if we did any thing important since April 19th. He said "Well we laid around on our _____s Friday and got rations Saturday and we are laying around again today." So I guess he is right. I got a nice note book from Bobbie the other day. I have been writing in it all day. I had notes made of all of this. I just copied it down the last couple of days. The wind is blowing like the devil today. Just like New Mexico. I just heard that the Russians are in Berlin. "Buono"!! It also made us pretty happy when they took Vienna, Austria. It had 375 flak guns.

April 23, 1945

I had guard duty this morning from 2:am until 6:am. I slept until noon. Got a package from Mother today. Pete and Luke flew today in ship #54. They saw a lot of German convoys moving north. Allied planes strafing and a lot of artillery fire at our front lines. They had a lot of flak at the target.

April 24, 1945

Ed, Art, Luke, Joe and I flew this morning. A test hop in ship #49. I got about 30 minutes stick time. Then Art got up and left me alone in there and Joe sat down in the pilot's seat and both of us flew for a few minutes. then I got up and left Joe there all alone. Then Ed sat down in the co-pilot's seat and Joe flew a little. Then Joe got up and Luke flew some. I really enjoyed it. Queenie had two little puppies, on the 21st. of April, one died on the 22nd. We went to gunnery class this afternoon, then we had a lecture tonight. This place is really getting C.S..

April 25, 1945

We went to a lecture at Group Headquarters this morning. Flew a gunnery mission in ship #45 this afternoon.

Mission#	<u>NINETEEN</u>
Date:	April 26, 1945
Pilot:	Shimanski
Plane number:	47 "SADSACK"

Target:	Sachensburg, Austria. Rail yards.
Take off time:	7:25am.
Time of landing:	2:10pm.
Quantity, Size & type of bombs:	Nineteen 250lb. bombs, plus one propaganda bomb.
Visibility over target:	Clear
Altitude:	21,000ft.
Temperature:	-28 degrees C.
Fighters expected:	50 to 60
Flak guns expected:	None

Our primary target was a munitions dump, but 10-10 coverage at target. We hit the rail yards good at our alternate target. I saw the bombs from the flight behind us strike. They hit the side of a hill and walked right through a small town, including the rail yards. The target elevation was 5,000ft.. We bombed from 21,000ft. so we were only 16,000ft. from the ground.

April 27, 1945

Saw a show at the 725th. squadron. "Maisy goes to Reno."

April 29, 1945

Went to G.I. movie at the 725th. squadron tonight. We just heard that Italian Patriots shot Benito Mussolini and some other Fascist.

April 30, 1945

There was a small fire in the mess hall today at noon. They put it out with Carbon Tetra Chloride. It smelled so bad we ate in our tent. Went to a gunnery class at group headquarters from 3:pm until 5:pm.

There is an argument tonight about what to name Queenie's pup. Luke, Pete and Todd say "Prop wash." Joe, Jerry and I say we don't know yet.

May 1, 1945

We went to an ordinance lecture at group headquarters today. It was really good. I learned more about bombs and fuses today than I have ever known. It was really interesting. We go on guard duty tonight 10:pm until 2:am. We had a black out last night, but we didn't know it until tonight. The lights went out but we just thought it was as usual. The power goes off all the time for short and long periods. We expect it.

May 2, 1945

Slept until 10:30am. Mussolini death confirmed. Hitler died in Berlin. We are restricted to the base today and tomorrow. Hitler was 56. His birthday was in April. Hitler was succeeded by "Grand Admiral Doenitz." No details of Hitler's death given yet.

May 3, 1945

Just read in the Stars and Stripes that an unconditional surrender by all of Northern Italy was signed by a German Lieutenant Colonel, a representative of a German General Von Viebinghoff, and a

German Major, representing S.S. General Wolff. It was accepted by Lieutenant General W.D. Morgan, Chief of staff of A.F.H.G.. He signed as representative of Supreme Allied Commander, Field Marshal Sir Harold R.L.G. Alex. We just took it easy all day.

May 4, 1945

We went to ground school all day.

May 5, 1945

Joe, Todd and I went to Foggia. Bought a few things for souvenirs. We boiled some eggs in the tent. They were pretty good.

May 6, 1945

We took it easy again today. We are leaving tomorrow for rest camp. "The Isle of Capri." Bill is leaving for the USA this Thursday. (Lucky boy.) We all think we will be going too in a few weeks, or probably a few days, but no one knows. We might go to the Pacific.

May 7, 1945

We took off for Capri in ship #29. A 725th Squadron ship. The B24 was packed with too many guys. We were even standing in the bomb bay area. The ship was really overloaded. When we landed at Naples, I was standing in the bomb bay, the doors were open about four inches. I was looking at the ground, then I saw runway, and we just kept going, on and on, then I saw dirt and grass. We finally touched down. We had stopped just a few feet from a large ditch. We would all have been killed for sure if we had not stopped when we did. The young pilot was pale and trembling, when we all got out. I heard him say that he had not wanted to take off with such an overloaded plane. That was close. We ate dinner (lunch) in Naples. We were taken to Capri on a boat. Just off shore from Naples, they announced the unconditional surrender of Germany. V.E Day at last!!!

On Capri we stayed in room #10 at the Windsor hotel. It had large French windows overlooking the harbor and the town of Capri. A very beautiful view. We ate at the La Palma hotel. We ate breakfast in the inside dinning room and lunch and dinner on the terrace. It was really nice to have the waiter serve us. We were served in big style. Appetizers, soup, the main course, then dessert. But the chow wasn't so good. There were roving musicians playing "Lilly Marlane" and other popular songs all over the dinning areas.

May 8, 1945

After chow, we went for a row boat ride half way around the island and saw the "Blue Grotto." It was really a beautiful thing to see. It was a large cave with a small entrance. We had to almost lay down in the boat to get into the cave. The light had to come up through the water under the rock arch, so it made the white rock walls and ceiling of the cave a beautiful blue. The Italians call it "Grotto Azzurro" meaning the Blue Arch. The water in the cave was 150ft. deep with fish swimming all around. When they were between you and the light they were black silhouettes, and when they were on the other side of the boat, they looked silvery blue. There were various kinds of crawling creatures on the ceiling and walls. The more our eyes adjusted to the low light, the more beautiful everything became. The creatures on the ceiling and walls were every color you could imagine. I think we stayed in there about an hour.

After lunch we went to Anna Capri, it is another town on the island. There we saw an old church "The San Michael." It is very old. The floor is made of tiles, which are put together like a big jigsaw puzzle to form one big picture. It was remarkable because each piece was painted and baked separately. Some of the pieces came out lighter and some darker after being baked. Then we went to a villa that was built in the 1850s. The pillars and statues were as old as 23AD. Then we saw another old church, or a kind of study for Bishops. It would have been just too perfect if Bobbie could have been along. After dinner, Todd, Jerry and I saw "Keys of the Kingdom." Capri is a wonderful place, but it makes me so darned blue for Bobbie.

May 9, 1945

Todd, Jerry and I went to the ruins of the castle of Tiberus. He was emperor of the Romans after Caesar. It is called "Mosaeca" castle. Built over 2,000yrs. ago, the castle is supposed to have over 400 rooms. All but a few are covered in dirt and sand. We saw two floors of bath rooms, two floors of guest rooms, the large dinning room, the library, the original Sun Dial for telling the time, and four large cisterns, they were just very large stone rooms. When one got full it overflowed into the next and so on. We also saw where Tiberus had his wives bathed in donkey milk. When he got tired of one he threw her over a 325ft. cliff. We saw that cliff, it had large rocks at the bottom where all the wives landed. They said he tried to throw them out to sea. Then he would select another one from all over Italy. After lunch we laid in the sun in our shorts and played ping pong.

May 10, 1945

Just looked around and went to two nice red cross buildings here. One is a nice home that someone turned over to the red cross for us to enjoy. It is white trimmed in green. It is a very nice place. the other one is a Villa that was turned over to the American Red Cross. It is nice too, but I like the Valentino Club better than the Terrace Club. I would like to stay here for ever if I just had Bobbie and Clyrene.

May 11, 12, & 13th.

Just walked around and enjoyed two red cross places.

May 14, 1945

We got up at 7:30am. Packed up and ate breakfast. We rode the "Funicolare" trolley down to the pier and got on the boat. Ate lunch in Naples. Walked around a little then got on a truck and went to the airport. Waited until after 5pm. for the plane to take off. Got to our Squadron about 7pm. Ate cold chow (out of mess kits BAH!!!). I got several letters.

May 15, 1945

Got PX rations. Heard that we are going to fly home in a few days. Boy Oh Boy!! Buono!! Went to Group Headquarters tonight and got all my records fixed up. Boy! Just think!! I will have my wife and baby in my arms in a few days. Buono!!

May 16, 1945

I laid out in the sun a little while. I guess Bobbie will have a good tan and I will be as white as a Lilly.

We go on guard duty tonight from 2:am until 6:am. Went to show at 725th squadron. Saw "Flame of Barbary Coast." with John Wayne. Todd and I said that we would try to go to Graumans Chinese theater in Hollywood three weeks from tonight at 8:15pm. I hope we can.

May 17, 1945

Got all of our air corps supply today, got form 206 checked. I have 19 missions and 137 hours and 50 minutes combat hours. Heard today that we would probably leave Sunday. Flying home "Buono"!! Bobbie will wonder why I am writing "Free" mail. The mail room stopped selling stamps and I ran out. Everything is just about ready to pull out.

May 18, 1945

Had detail at supply sorting lumber and hauling and building boxes to pack things in.

May 19, 1945

We brief tomorrow at 9:am. I packed all of my things today. I am ready to go and very anxious.

May 20, 1945

Wind blew and dust flew and my hay fever gave me hell. We went to briefing this morning. We leave in three or four days. We turn in our overcoats tomorrow.

May 21, 1945

Heard today that half the crews leave Wednesday and the rest Thursday. (23rd & 24th) All Italians leave tonight. GIs will pull K.P. and all detail from now on. But the whole group will be gone in less than two weeks, I think. It seems we will never get started. I want to see my wife and baby and all my loved ones.

May 22, 1945

Darned wind and sand really blew and my hay fever is getting worse. I will really be glad to get out of here. We should leave any day now.

May 23, 1945

We tore our tent down today and moved into the parachute building. Queenie ate so many rats her sides stuck out like they did when she was pregnant. There were a lot of them under our floor boards. I haven't said much about Queenie until now. She was a very intelligent dog about 10 inches high with short light brown hair. She loved to chew gum. She would just lie there chewing like a human, and stretch it out with her front paws from her mouth. She always had gum on her front paws, on what would be the inside of her wrists. She was very independent, she would choose one of us that she wanted to be with and ignore the rest, even if we called her. She was our dog, she adopted us, and would have nothing to do with any other crew. Joe, Jerry and I go on guard duty 5:pm until midnight.

May 24, 1945

Joe took a post at 10:pm and got off at midnight. We dodged detail all day today. Took some things out to the ship. It is ship #52. Pretty nice condition. Wind and sand still at it. I typed some letters last night.

May 25, 1945

Policed the area this afternoon. (Walked around picking up trash, etc.) This place sure looks barren with all the tents torn down. After supper the whole squadron of enlisted men policed the area some more and moved several big lumber piles in back of supply.

May 26, 1945

All ground personnel took off in trucks at about 10:30am and all crews but eight of us left at 12:30pm. We will leave tomorrow about noon for Gioia, Italy. The boat for the ground men is waiting in Naples, Italy now for them. They should be home soon. We eat at 725th squadron. We ate lunch there today it was pretty good. Lucas is on K.P. this afternoon, and Pete goes on in the morning. The dust has blown like the devil here all day. It is 5:30pm now and it is still at it real strong. Gosh this place is deserted. Well, this is our last night in the squadron and I am not a bit sorry. I am really anxious to get started on my way home. I can hardly wait to get my wife and baby in my arms. I hope neither of us find any changes in each other, unless it is better. I don't think I have changed, but I don't guess I could tell if I had.

May 27, 1945

We were supposed to take off at 1:30pm, but we took off at 10:30am. Queenie followed us to the plane and tried to get aboard. She never tried this before. She was standing behind the plane in the wind and dust when we taxied out. It was very sad. We got to Gioia, Italy about 11:am. Ate and took showers. Then we got the surprise of our lives. The crews are usually here about three days. We processed this afternoon and are ready to leave in the morning. The ship is loaded, etc. The guys that came down yesterday are not processed yet, and are they mad. But for us it is Buono!!!

We were sitting in a big conference hall, maybe 100 or 200 men, we were listening to lectures. We heard the guys calling Queenie, trying to get her to come to them. She found us and jumped in our laps and was so happy, she just went from one of us to another. She spent the night with us, then in the morning, we had to leave her again. The last time I saw Queenie she was behind the ship as we taxied out, with the wind from the props blowing sand and dust at her. I am not ashamed to say that I cried.

May 28, 1945

Left Gioia, Italy at 8:30am and arrived in Marrakech, West Africa at 6:30pm. 10 hours non stop is a mighty long hop. Longer than any of our missions. We went to the mess hall and ate in trays, first time in over five months. Then took a good cold shower. Right now I am sitting on the wing of our ship #52 (448953). It had 44 combat missions and we flew it one or two. A nose gunner from Chicago was blinded in the nose turret. The turret was torn up so bad by flak that it had to be replaced. There are patches all over it where it has been punctured by flak. It is now 8:30pm in Italy, 7:30pm here, 12:30pm in New Mexico and 11:30am in California. Just think I will be home in about a week. On the way up here, we came across Sicily, Tunisia, Algiers, Palermo, and all the way across Africa.

May 29, 1945

Joe had a rash and went to the dispensary. They put him in the Hospital, so we are staying over one day. The rest of the boys went to town. I volunteered to guard the ship, I want to see the good old U.S. of A. I am tired of being over here. I laid out in the sun all afternoon. I am a little red.

May 30, 1945

All Joe had was some mosquito bites. Ha! We left Marrakech about 8:30am. and landed about nine hours later in Senegal, French West Africa. About eight miles from Dakar. Mallard Field, Africa. I bought some souvenirs. We have two Master Sergeants, Neuton & Cummm ridding with us as passengers to Trinidad.

May 31, 1945

We left Senegal at 8:45am Italy time. Landed in Brazil about 2:pm EWT (Same as NY) (9:pm Italy time). They made us taxi to an area away from other planes. We were not allowed to open any doors. It was very hot in the plane with everything closed up. After about a week, it seemed, two men came up in a jeep. They came in and sprayed everything in the plane including each of us thoroughly. When we got to our barracks and started out to the shower area, it started raining real hard. The shower area was inside a high wall with no roof. We just soaped up and rinsed off in the hard rain. The rain stopped on the way back to the barracks. Very tropical weather. I bought some perfume, channel #5, an alligator purse, some silk hose, and a pair of boots for me.

June 4, 1945

We left Natal, Brazil (?field) and landed at Atkisson field, British Guinea, South America. It rained about every ten minutes. A very tropical climate. Jungles all around the field. We crossed the Amazon river. It is really large. It is so wide it is like an ocean. We left the Master Sergeants. They will be stationed there.

June 5, 1945

Took off from Atkisson Field, British Guinea about 7:am. Landed about 3:pm at Borenquen Field, Puerto Rico.

About six weeks ago, we wrote "USA by June 5" on the glass in the door of our tent. It looks like we missed it by one day. It wasn't a bad guess though, the war was not over at that time.

June 6, 1945

At Borenquen Field, Puerto Rico, we were the first plane to taxi out to take off, but our left wing tip hit the rudder of another plane on our way out. So they made us taxi back and we had to lay over a day.

June 7, 1945

We took off from Borenquen Field, Puerto Rico and landed in the good old USA. Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia. HOME AT LAST!!!!!!!