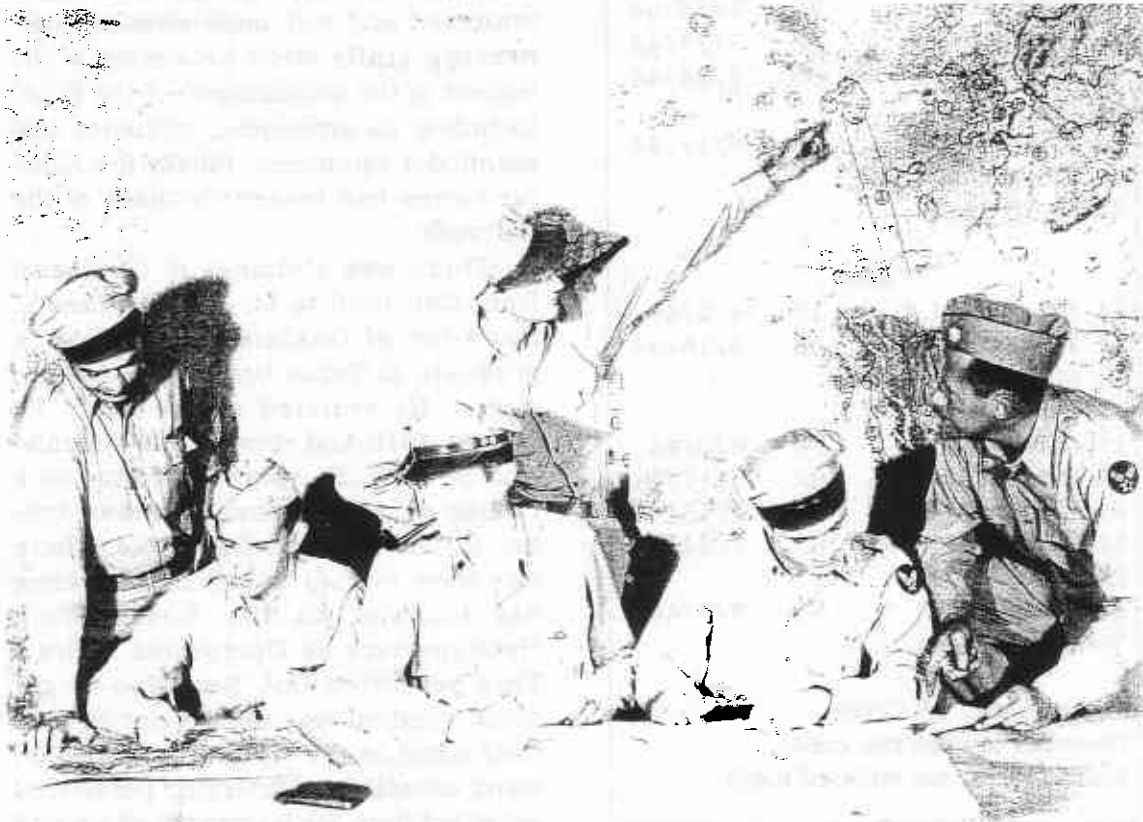

The Second 100 Missions



Plotting enemy anti-aircraft installations for route planning the combat missions to avoid the flak areas. Standing L to R: Jack Horner and Larry Wilson. Seated L to R: Jim Moeller, Kenneth Cool, Hugh Graff and Al Coons.

SEPTEMBER 1944

With winter coming, there were changes made in mission planning to avoid reduced activity because of bad weather. The formations of our B-24's would become smaller and thus more manageable in marginal weather. Some bombing strikes were single airplanes flying in bad weather and bombing by pathfinder. Pathfinder methods were used to a good advantage during bad weather months, continually disrupting the enemy's capability to wage war.

In September, the German Air Force fighters disappeared from the sky as far

as the 455th was concerned. If they were there, we did not see them. We continued with our attacks on the enemy's oil production and their aircraft industry. The war against oil was not over yet, as this month would prove, although one big target was eliminated from our list, Ploesti. Our targets would be the enemy's communication lines as well as his factories. We hit the marshalling yards and ports, along with the oil refineries.

Mission 107, September 1 We sent 30 B-24's to bomb the marshalling yards at Novi Sad. They bombed the

target with good results. Flak at the target was light and accurate but we had no losses. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 108, September 2 Thirty B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Nis, Yugoslavia. No aircraft returned early so that all planes dropped a total of 75 tons of 500# GP bombs on the target. Flak was light and not very accurate. All aircraft returned to base without incident.

Mission 109, September 3 The Group was sent to bomb a railroad bridge at Szeged, Yugoslavia. Twenty-eight B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs had a very good bomb run on the target with excellent results. Over 45% of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the target. Flak was encountered at the target but all returned safely.

Mission 110, September 4 Thirty-one B-24's loaded with 1,000# GP bombs were after bridges again. This time it was the railroad bridge at Tagliamento, Italy. The results were even better this time, with almost 60% falling into the 1,000 foot circular range. There was no flak at the target and all aircraft returned safely.

Mission 111, September 5 We were having such success in the bridge demolition missions that we were at another one. This time a bridge at Szolnok. Again we loaded 30 B-24's with 1,000# RDX bombs. The results improved again as we dropped over 68% within 1,000 feet of the target. With light flak and no fighters, all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 112, September 6 We had excellent weather and had flown six missions in as many days. The marshalling yards at Novi Sad, Yugoslavia were the target for the second time this week. Thirty B-24's loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs hit the target with over

75% of the bombs falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point, which was remarkable bombing. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate but we came home with no casualties.

Mission 113, September 8 After a day of rest, we sent 30 B-24's loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs to the bridges and marshalling yards at Brod, Yugoslavia. Flak at the target was heavy and intense, and we lost one of our planes to the flak batteries. Nine men were reported missing in action. The results were only fair with three of our planes receiving severe flak damage and three slight damage.

Mission 114, September 10 The weather deserted us as we sent 30 B-24's loaded with fragmentation bombs to the airdrome at Horschine, Austria. Weather turned the Group back over Austria and it returned to base. Half the airplanes jettisoned their bombs over the Adriatic while the rest returned theirs to the base. It was a judgment call either way as they were very "touchy" bombs.

Mission 115, September 12 This time, 27 B-24's were loaded with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the airdrome at Lechfield, Austria. Flak at the target was very heavy and intense. We lost four of our airplanes to flak with 41 crewmen missing in action. The bombing results were not that good for those losses. Two of our planes suffered severe damage as well.

Mission 116, September 13 We loaded 30 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. This was another long mission. We bombed the target by pathfinder and dropped 68 tons of bombs. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and very accurate. We lost three ships over the target. One pilot brought his plane back to Allied territory and the

crew bailed out successfully. Nineteen crewmen were missing in action.

Mission 117, September 15 We had a day of rest, then 29 B-24's dropped 69 tons of fragmentation bombs on Tatoi airdrome in Athens, Greece. Flak en route was light and inaccurate. At the target it got a little rougher and the flak was moderate to intense. One airplane received heavy damage from flak but we suffered no casualties and all planes returned to base.

Mission 118, September 17 We sent 27 B-24's loaded with 1,000# GP bombs to the marshalling yards at Rakos, Hungary. The results were not satisfactory as we had no bombs within the 1,000 foot range. Flak was moderate at the target but we had no losses.

Mission 119, September 18 We loaded 29 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the marshalling yards at Czegled, Czechoslovakia. We encountered no flak en route nor at the target area but we still did not do a good bombing job as only 26% fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 120, September 20 Twenty-nine B-24's loaded with fragmentation bombs attacked the airdrome at Malacky, Hungary. Sixty-five tons of bombs were dropped on the target with good results as 18 enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Flak was moderate and heavy but not accurate. All our planes returned safely.

Mission 121, September 21 We were again loaded with fragmentation bombs, which meant another airdrome. This time it was the Riem Main airdrome at Munich, Germany. Thirty B-24's dropped 62 tons of bombs on the target area with good results. Flak was heavy and intense at the target but we came through with no losses.

Mission 122, September 23 We were back to attacking railroad bridges. This time 31 B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs attacked the railroad bridge at Dona Di Piavi, Italy. We encountered no flak at this target and we got excellent results. Over 67% of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. All planes returned safely.

Mission 123, September 24 We were back to the Tatoi airdrome at Athens, Greece. This time 32 B-24's were loaded with 100# GP bombs. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and heavy, and we were fortunate to suffer no losses. We did destroy four enemy planes on the ground. All planes returned to base safely.

No missions were flown in the last week of September and the Group got a well deserved rest. During the month we flew 17 missions with 502 planes over the target, dropping 1,173 tons of bombs. We lost eight aircraft with 69 crewmen missing in action. Twenty additional aircraft were damaged by flak. We destroyed 32 enemy aircraft on the ground, so it wasn't a bad month for the Group. The war continued as we move into October.

OCTOBER 1944

October brought bad weather for the first three days. Although missions were scheduled, none were flown until the 4th of the month. While we still were hitting oil refineries, we also concentrated on the marshalling yards that transported the oil. Oil refineries would only be 23% of our missions this month while over 60% would be against marshalling yards. Missions from here on would be effected by weather as much as anything else.

Mission 124, October 4 Twenty-six B-24's dropped 500# RDX bombs on the marshalling yards at Munich,

Germany. Flak at the target was intense, accurate and heavy. The barrage lasted over four minutes, which made it seem like hours. Two of our aircraft received flak damage, but all returned safely.

Mission 125, October 4 While one portion of the Group was bombing Munich, the Group also sent 17 B-24's to bomb the viaduct at Avisio, Italy. These planes were loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs. No results were observed due to cloud-cover. Flak at the target was moderately accurate and heavy. Six aircraft received damage from the flak but all returned safely.

Mission 126, October 7 We were assigned another split mission. Our first contingent was loaded with 500# RDX bombs to hit the Vienna Winterhafen oil storage facilities. Bombing was rather good considering the amount of flak thrown at the Group, which was intense, accurate and heavy. We lost one airplane to flak with ten crewmen missing in action. Six aircraft received slight damage from flak.

Mission 127, October 7 Our second mission this day was an attack on the airdrome at Gyor, Hungary. We loaded 18 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs. Bombing accuracy was not very good as we failed to hit the target. Flak was light, inaccurate but of the heavy variety. We all came home safely.

Mission 128, October 10 Twenty-nine B-24's were loaded with 500# RDX bombs to attack the railroad bridge at Latisana. The mission was aborted due to bad weather at the target. All planes returned to base.

Mission 129, October 11 We again loaded up with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the harbor at Trieste, Italy. Our bombing was much better this day, as we got over 64% of the bombs within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Flak at

the target was light and inaccurate. All planes returned safely.

Mission 130, October 12 Thirty-nine B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs struck the marshalling yards at Bologna, Italy. Flak at the target was light and inaccurate but still of the heavy variety. Bombing was only fair as we got less than 30% within 1,000 feet of the target. All planes returned to base.

Mission 131, October 13 This was another day for double missions. We loaded the first mission with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany. Flak at this target was always intense and accurate, and this day was no exception. We lost two aircraft to flak. One plane managed to make it back to allied territory and the crew was recovered. We reported 11 crewmen missing and one killed in action. It was a rough mission as six airplanes received heavy damage and four with slight damage. The flak at Blechhammer was indeed accurate.

Mission 132, October 13 The second mission for this day was to the marshalling yards at Szekesfehervar, Germany. Twenty B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs dropped 45% of their bombs on the target with no flak, fighters or casualties. All planes returned without incident.

Mission 133, October 14 The Group was scheduled to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. Thirty-five B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs dropped 78 tons on the refinery by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was intense, accurate and heavy. We lost one aircraft over the target and two more resulting from flak. Thirty-one crewmen were missing in action and eight planes received damage; another long, rough mission.

Mission 134, October 16 We

bombed the marshalling yards at Graz, Austria, with 39 B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs. Although the flak at the target was intense and accurate, we managed to get through the mission without any losses.

Mission 135, October 17 We sent 27 B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the marshalling yards and factories at Miribor, Hungary. Flak at the target was moderate, accurate and heavy but we managed to come through it without a loss.

Mission 136, October 20 We sent 33 B-24's carrying fragmentation bombs to the marshalling yards at Innsbruck, Austria. Flak at this target was moderate and inaccurate, and we escaped without any damage. All planes returned to base.

Mission 137, October 21 We sent 25 B-24's to bomb the marshalling yards at Szombathely, Hungary. We dropped 62 tons of 500# GP bombs on the target with over 57% falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. A few days after this mission we received a communication from the C.O. of the 304th Wing. It informed the Group that General Twining was very pleased with the results of the bombing effort by the Group, as the attack on these marshalling yards did a great deal of damage. It was a great feat of bombing by the lead bombardier and the Group as a whole. There was no flak at the target and all planes returned safely.

Mission 138, October 23 We were back in the oil business. We loaded 24 B-24's with 500# GP bombs and struck the oil storage facilities at Regensberg Winterhafen. We bombed by pathfinder method, so there was no way to tell if we did a good job except from the fires we started. Flak at the target was moderate, accurate and heavy. We brought all planes home safely.

Mission 139, October 23 We loaded 16 more B-24's with 100# GP bombs for the second mission of the day. They were scheduled to bomb the Motor Transport Park at Ossopo. Weather again made the target unreachable and all planes brought their bombs back to base.

October was a month that saw bad weather effect our efforts. We flew 16 missions in only 13 days of flyable weather. The coming months look the same as far as weather is concerned. We managed to put 425 aircraft over the targets. We dropped over 793 tons of bombs on the enemy. We lost five aircraft from enemy action with 52 crewmen missing in action. We had one man killed in action and one man wounded.

NOVEMBER 1944

Winter time brought on weather problems that not only hindered bombing efforts, but also maintenance and other ground support functions. This month would be a harbinger of what to expect in the next four or five months: bad weather, bad weather and more bad weather. But the Group would nevertheless fly almost 20 missions. Four of these would be aborted and nine would bomb by pathfinder method. Still it was remarkable for the Group to take off on that many missions; a real credit to the support personnel and crews.

Mission 140, November 1 Twenty-eight B-24's took off loaded with 100# incendiary bombs. Twenty-one aircraft bombed Cakovek marshalling yards as a target of opportunity. One aircraft returned when it lost the formation in a cloud bank. Six aircraft returned to base without dropping their bombs as they could not line up on the target. There were no fighters or flak in the area and all planes returned safely.

Mission 141, November 3 Three B-

24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off to bomb the aircraft factory at Klagenfort, Germany. One aircraft returned early because of ice on the wings. Two aircraft dropped their bombs by pathfinder method. Results were unobserved because of clouds. The two B-24's returned undamaged and there were no casualties.

Mission 142, November 4 Forty-one B-24's took off to bomb the Linz, Austria main marshalling yards. Each airplane was loaded with 500# RDX bombs. Thirty-seven of these aircraft dropped their bombs on the target. Two of the aircraft did not bomb because of malfunction of the pathfinder equipment and two aircraft returned early because of crew sickness. Since bombing was done by pathfinder method, no results were observed. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 143, November 5 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the Florisdorf Oil Refinery at Vienna, Austria. Half of the B-24's carried 500# RDX bombs while the other half carried 500# incendiary bomb clusters. Bombing was done by pathfinder method so no results were observed. Flak at the target was intense, inaccurate and heavy. Flak en route was moderate and fairly accurate at Bratislavia. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 144, November 5 Shortly after the 28 B-24's took off to bomb the oil refinery at Vienna, eight B-24's were sent to bomb the Mitro Vica, Italy troop concentrations. These aircraft were forced back by bad weather and did not drop their bombs. All aircraft returned safely.

Mission 145, November 6 Forty B-24's took off to bomb the South Ordinance Depot at Vienna, Austria. They were escorted by P-51's. One B-24 returned early because of a gas leak, so

39 aircraft dropped 93.5 tons of a mixture of RDX bombs and incendiaries on the target. Flak at the target was intense but inaccurate. Eight enemy aircraft were seen in the Lake Balaton area but did not attack. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 146, November 7 Twenty-eight B-24's attacked troop concentrations at Sjenica, Yugoslavia. They dropped 66.5 tons of RDX bombs on the target. Flak at the target was non-existent. Bombing was done visually with fair to poor results. All aircraft returned to base.

Mission 147, November 11 The Group was scheduled to bomb the marshalling yards at Linz, Austria. All 28 B-24's returned to base without dropping their bombs due to bad weather.

Mission 148, November 15 Five B-24's took off to bomb the Linz Benzol Refinery. All five aircraft bombed the target by pathfinder method and returned safely despite the intense flak at the target. None of the aircraft received any damage.

Mission 149, November 16 Two missions were scheduled against two different targets. On the first target, 28 B-24's took off to bomb the Munich West marshalling yards. Flak in the target area was intense and accurate. Bombs were dropped by pathfinder method so the results were unobserved. All planes returned to base with no casualties.

Mission 150, November 16 The second mission was an eight aircraft raid on troop concentrations at Visgrad, Yugoslavia. Seven B-24's dropped 13.5 tons of bombs in the target area where slight and inaccurate flak was experienced. All aircraft returned to base.

Mission 151, November 17 Eighteen B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Mirabor, Hungary.

Flak at the target was very intense and accurate, and one aircraft was shot down by flak. One crew member was killed by flak and three others received serious injuries. Bombing results were good with over 40% of the bombs falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Twelve men were missing in action.

Mission 152, November 17 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the Gyor, Hungary marshalling yards. These aircraft were loaded with 500# RDX bombs. Flak at the target was heavy and accurate. One aircraft was seen with one engine feathered and did not return. Ten men were reported missing in action. Bombing was done by pathfinder method so no observation of results could be made. The rest of the aircraft all returned to base.

Mission 153, November 18 Forty B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs were briefed to bomb the Airdrome at Vicenza, Italy. The mission was flown without escort and bombing was done visually with excellent results. Over 50% of the bombs fell in the target area causing extensive damage to the installation. Flak at the target was light and generally inaccurate. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 154, November 19 The Group was again scheduled for two targets. The first was the Locomotive Repair Depot at Verona, Italy. The target was completely covered by clouds and the weather was very bad so the mission was aborted. All planes returned to base.

Mission 155, November 19 The second target for that day was the Lobau Oil Blending Plant at Vienna, Austria. Twenty-seven B-24's carrying 100# GP bombs bombed the target by pathfinder method. Intense but inaccurate flak was experienced at the target area and no planes received damage; all

returned to base safely.

Mission 156, November 20 Twenty-eight B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off to bomb targets in Czechoslovakia, but due to weather obscuring the primary target, the group bombed the factories at Zlin, Czechoslovakia. Sixty-three and a half tons of bombs fell on this target with good results. No flak was experienced in the target area and all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 157, November 22 Thirty-six B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Villach, Austria. No flak was observed in the target area and no bombs were dropped because of bad weather but we still lost one aircraft, with 11 men missing in action. The B-24 was last seen losing altitude and appeared to be on fire. No chutes were observed. The rest of the planes returned safely.

Mission 158, November 25 This was the Group's last mission in November. This was also our first mission flying three pathfinder aircraft at night. The target was the marshalling yards at Munich West. The three B-24's took off at 0045 hours and were over the target at 0409. One B-24 dropped its bombs on the primary. The other two dropped their bombs on the Innsbruck main marshalling yard because the primary target had weather clearing and the planes would not have the protection of the bad weather from fighter attacks. No flak or enemy aircraft were seen on the mission. All three planes returned to base safely at 0630 hours.

November bombing was over. Although our efforts were heroic, the results left a lot to be desired. We managed to get a total of 429 aircraft over the targets and dropped a total of 707.1 tons of bombs. The Group flew 19 missions while losing three aircraft. We

reported 41 crewmen missing in action; we had one man killed in action; we also had three severely wounded. The 19 missions were flown in only 15 days. The doubling up helped our totals for the month and showed how efficient our ground support had become. Tougher flying weather was coming, so we were getting prepared.

DECEMBER 1944

As was anticipated, December brought bad weather, but it also brought a new concept in strategic bombing. Bombers would make single and three ship formation attacks on targets in bad weather. These attacks would be accomplished by pathfinder method and it showed how much the 15th Air Force had progressed in the art of bombing through an overcast. Twelve of the 15 missions would be done by radar and only four by visual methods, with one mission aborted. This gives one some idea of the bad weather conditions in which the Group had to fly.

Mission 159, December 3 Three B-24's took off to bomb a primary target but were unable to bomb due to clearing weather at the target. One aircraft bombed the alternate target, the marshalling yards at Villach, Austria by pathfinder method. Two aircraft jettisoned their bombs in the Adriatic and all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 160, December 6 Thirty-seven B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Graz, Austria. All planes returned to base when weather prevented them from reaching the target. Some of the planes jettisoned their delayed fuse bombs in the Adriatic while the remainder brought their bombs back to base.

Mission 161, December 7 On the third anniversary of Pearl Harbor, two B-24's took off at 0223 hours to bomb

their primary target at the head of the Adriatic. One aircraft abandoned the mission because the weather appeared to be clearing and offered no cover from enemy fighters. The other aircraft bombed the alternate target, the marshalling yards at Klagenfurt, Germany. This aircraft dropped 1.5 tons of 100# RDX bombs by pathfinder method and returned to base at 0730 hours.

Mission 162, December 8 Two B-24's took off to bomb targets in the Vienna area. One aircraft returned early because of a malfunction of the pathfinder equipment. He jettisoned his bombs in the Adriatic. The primary target was clear and the other aircraft bombed the marshalling yards at Graz, Austria by pathfinder method with good results, as fires were seen in the target area. Flak at the target was moderate, inaccurate and heavy. Both planes returned to base safely.

Mission 163, December 9 Fifteen B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs struck the industrial area of Linz, Austria by pathfinder method. They reported that they had a good run on the target. Flak at the target was moderate and inaccurate. No observations were made due to the cloud-cover. All planes returned to base.

Mission 164, December 12 Four B-24's equipped with pathfinder equipment took off to bomb the oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany without escort. Two of the aircraft bombed the primary target as briefed. The other two bombed a target of opportunity at Neisse, Germany by pathfinder methods. One of the bombs dropped at the primary target was a leaflet bomb and in falling, it shattered the ball housing the pathfinder equipment. Three aircraft returned to base and one made a forced landing at the island of Vis.

Mission 165, December 15

Twenty-five B-24's dropped 50.5 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the freight yards at Linz, Austria. Bombing was accomplished by pathfinder method, so no results were seen. Flak at the target was moderate, inaccurate and heavy. No planes were damaged and all returned to base.

Mission 166, December 16 Thirty-nine B-24's took off to bomb the Synthetic Oil Plant at Brux, Germany. One aircraft broke its landing gear on take off and was forced to jettison its bombs in the Adriatic. It then crash-landed at the Gioia, Italy airdrome. One other aircraft returned early due to engine trouble. Twenty-eight B-24's dropped 60 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the primary target by pathfinder method. One flight leader could not open his bomb bay doors so the whole flight missed the bomb run. These aircraft dropped their bombs on any target of opportunity that they could find. Flak at the target was intense but inaccurate so only one plane received slight flak damage. All planes returned to base without incident.

Mission 167, December 17 Thirty-six B-24's took off to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. Two airplanes returned early due to gas leaks while 31 dropped their bombs by pathfinder method. Sixty-six tons of 500# RDX bombs were dropped on the primary target. Three aircraft dropped their bombs on other targets since the flight leader was out of position on the bomb run. Flak at the target was moderate and generally inaccurate. One of our aircraft was lost and was last seen about 5,000 feet below the formation with an engine on fire. No chutes were observed and ten crewmen were missing in action. All other planes returned safely.

Mission 168, December 18 Thirty-

seven B-24's took off to bomb targets in Germany. Three aircraft returned early and 31 dropped 74.5 tons of 500# RDX bombs on a target of opportunity, the marshalling yards at Sopron. The bombing was accomplished by pathfinder method. No flak was experienced in the target area or en route to the target. All planes returned to base safely.

Mission 169, December 20 Of the 37 B-24's that took off to bomb the Skoda Works at Pilsen, Germany only 27 were able to drop their bombs on the target. The others, because of various troubles, were not able to drop their bombs. The Group dropped 66.5 tons on the target by pathfinder method. The bomb load for that day was 500# RDX bombs. Flak at the target was slight and inaccurate. Despite this, we lost six aircraft, five of them to unexplained causes while one aircraft was seen to crash into a mountain. Sixty-two crewmen were missing in action. All other aircraft returned to base.

Mission 170, December 25 It was Christmas Day and 28 B-24's took off to bomb targets in Austria. Weather conditions forced 12 aircraft to return early and only 15 aircraft bombed the third alternate, Wels, Austria marshalling yards. The bombing was done by visual methods with just fair results. One aircraft was missing and was not seen after takeoff. Five aircraft returned to other bases. Ten crewmen were reported missing in action.

Mission 171, December 26 Twenty-six B-24's dropped 50 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the oil refinery at Oswiescim, Germany. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. Three aircraft were missing. One was seen with a feathered engine and heading toward Russia, another was seen jettisoning equipment and it too was heading east

from the target area. The other aircraft was reported to have landed at the island of Vis. Thirty-three crewmen were reported missing in action. All other crews returned to base.

Mission 172, December 27 The weather was giving us a break and we were able to get three days in a row with favorable flying weather. We had 31 B-24's take off and bomb the main marshalling yards at Graz, Austria. The Group dropped 62.5 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the target with fair results as 35% of them fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Slight to moderate flak was experienced at the target. All aircraft returned to base with no casualties.

Mission 173, December 28 This was the fourth day in a row with good flying weather and we sent 28 B-24's to bomb the primary target, the oil refinery at Kolin, Czechoslovakia. There was no flak at the target and none en route. All planes returned to base safely, a milk run for a change.

Mission 174, December 29 Twenty-six B-24's took off to bomb industrial targets in Austria. An 80-mile an hour head wind over the Alps caused the group to abandon the primary target and they bombed the third alternate target. Fourteen B-24's dropped 30.75 tons on Rosenhiem marshalling yards. The other 12 aircraft bombed the locomotive repair shops at Udine. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate, which accounted for one aircraft being lost. Another aircraft crash-landed at Pianola, Italy as it ran out of fuel. These crewmen escaped serious injury. Nine crewmen were reported missing in action.

The month of December was over as far as missions were concerned. It was a month that saw the Group fly several different kinds of missions with two and three single planes as well as many

pathfinder missions. The Group flew a total of 16 missions with 359 aircraft over the targets. These aircraft dropped a total of 649.5 tons of bombs. We lost 15 aircraft with only four due to flak and the other 11 due to other causes. There were 111 crewmen reported missing in action and 32 reported killed in action. December was not a good month in that regard. We were looking forward to the new year as one that would end the conflict.

JANUARY 1945

January started off just like one would expect in this climate: cold, snow and rain. The outlook for continued operations was not good. The Group had to see what developed from day to day. Most of the targets were communications targets as these were closer and gave us a chance to hit them before the weather changed. Briefings would continue in the off chance that the weather would break and the Group could fly. This was the month when the Wing and Group started designating dual missions and Blue and Red Forces.

Mission 175, January 4 The Group got its first mission of the new year. Twenty-seven B-24's dropped 62.75 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the primary and secondary targets. The primary target was the marshalling yards at Verona Porto Nuava, Italy. The secondary was the marshalling yards at Vicenza, Italy. Flak at the targets was moderate and accurate. One aircraft crash-landed at Gioia when its landing gear would not lock in the down position. The crew was not injured. One top turret gunner engineer was slightly wounded in the leg from flak. All other aircraft returned to base.

Mission 176, January 8 Twenty-six B-24's took off to bomb a goods depot in Linz, Austria. After flying for almost

eight hours, all planes returned safely to base without dropping their bombs due to poor weather conditions at the target.

Mission 177, January 15 Twenty-nine B-24's took off to bomb the Florisdorf marshalling yards at Vienna, Austria. Nine aircraft returned early and only 19 aircraft dropped their bombs on the target. One plane had its bombs fail to release. A total of 35.5 tons of 500# RDX bombs were dropped by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. One crewman was severely injured and one received a slight flak injury. All planes returned to base safely.

Mission 178, January 19 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the railroad bridge at Brod, Austria. Only 20 aircraft bombed the target with unobserved results. One flight of five did not drop its bombs because their flight leader's bomb bay doors would not open. Two aircraft returned early. One aircraft had engine failure, could not make the field and crashed two miles short of the runway. Four crewmen were injured, one seriously. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and accurate. Six crewmen suffered flak wounds, one serious. Only 24 aircraft returned to base.

Mission 179, January 20 The crews were briefed to bomb the main marshalling yards at Linz, Austria. Twenty-six B-24's tried unsuccessfully to get to the target. They ran into cloud-cover from 3/10th to 9/10th cover and impenetrable cloud banks at the head of the Adriatic. All planes returned to base without dropping their bombs.

Mission 180, January 31 On the last day of the month, both red and blue forces were briefed to bomb the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. The blue force had 19 B-24's that were carrying 500# GP bombs. They bombed the

target and returned to base at 1640 hours. Flak at target was moderate and accurate. Bombing was done by pathfinder method. Results were not observed. All planes returned safely.

Mission 181, January 31 The red force consisted of 18 B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs. They too encountered moderate and accurate flak at the target area. They dropped a total of 29 tons on the target by pathfinder method. All aircraft returned to base without casualties.

January was our least productive month to date. All we could hope for was an improvement in the weather. The Group flew a total of seven missions, putting 168 aircraft over the targets. We dropped a total of 200.25 tons of bombs. That was our lowest total since beginning operations in February 1944. We lost two aircraft, but only one was to enemy action. The group had ten crewmen injured; five of those were serious. January was not one of our better months.

FEBRUARY 1945

February started off with marginal weather, then it got worse. The first mission had to be aborted due to bad weather. The concentration on targets this month was still oil, along with our attacks on the enemy's communications, otherwise known as marshalling yards. So far the 15th Air Force had done a tremendous job of disrupting the enemy's railroad system, denying them vital supplies for their war effort. The 455th had a big hand in this operation for which they were justly proud.

Mission 182, February 1 Thirty-eight B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs took off to bomb the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. Weather was so bad en route and at the target that the group leader decided not to bomb

as PFF was not prescribed for this mission. No enemy resistance was encountered and all planes returned to base.

Mission 183, February 5 The Group sent 42 B-24's loaded with 250# GP bombs to the oil storage facilities at Regensburg. These facilities were known as Rhenani Danubia Oil Storage. Flak at the target was moderate and inaccurate. Thirty-eight of the aircraft bombed the primary target by pathfinder method and one plane dropped its bomb load on a railroad siding at Mettighafen, Austria. The primary target results were unobserved as the target was cloud-covered. Three aircraft returned early and the rest returned to base without any casualties.

Mission 184, February 7 Both red and blue forces were scheduled and briefed to bomb the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. The red force took off at 0815 hours with 20 B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs. One aircraft returned early with engine trouble and 19 aircraft bombed the primary target by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and accurate. No planes received damage and all returned to base safely.

Mission 185, February 7 The blue force with 20 B-24's loaded with the same bomb load took off at 1012 hours. One aircraft returned early because of engine failure. Fourteen aircraft bombed Moosbierbaum by visual methods with fair success. Five aircraft returned their bombs to base as the flight leader's bombsight was inoperative and the rest of the flight did not bomb. Flak at the target was intense and accurate. One crewman was killed in action. Nineteen aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 186, February 8 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the Matzleindorf marshalling yards at

Vienna, Austria. They dropped 54 tons of 500# RDX bombs on the target by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was intense but inaccurate. All aircraft returned to base safely. No enemy fighters were seen. However, one B-24 with markings similar to the Group markings took a position off the number two man in Baker Box. Radio contact could not be made and all guns trained on him. When the Group reached Lake Balaton, the aircraft made a "180" and left.

Mission 187, February 9 On the 9th of February, three B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off to bomb the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. The bombing was through 10/10th cloud-cover. The pathfinder return was very good. Flak at the target was intense but inaccurate. All three planes returned to base after flying for almost six hours. No fighters were seen.

Mission 188, February 13 Today, red and blue forces would bomb different targets. Red force would bomb the Matzleindorf marshalling yards. Twenty-one B-24's carrying 500# RDX bombs dropped their bombs, sighting visually. Forty-one percent of the 36.5 tons fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point, a very successful bombing mission. Flak at the target was intense and accurate, and two aircraft received extensive damage. All aircraft returned to base.

Mission 189, February 13 The blue force was briefed to bomb the marshalling yards at Maribor, Yugoslavia. Twenty B-24's carrying the same load as the red force bombed the primary target by visual methods. Over 40% of their bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate. Four aircraft received slight damage but all returned to base without incident.