

# MISSION NO 50

**WE WERE TOLD TO EXPECT ABOUT 1100 88MM AND 105MM GUNS OVER THE TARGET**

**By:**

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## **Part 1**

On July 20, 1944. crew 36 of the 765th squadron landed with most of the crew completing the required 50 missions and a return trip stateside. The exceptions were Dennis, Bombardier; Mayfield, Engineer; and McRee, Radio Operator.

On the next mission I was scheduled to fly as a fill in engineer with another crew, some undoubtedly fill ins also. Col. Glanzberg, our group CO was to be the pilot. Col. Glanzberg never flew milk runs so I anticipated a difficult mission.

The briefing for the mission of July 22, 1944 was not good news at all. Col. Glanzberg was to fly 15th AF Lead on a mission to Ploesti, Rumania, one of the heaviest defended targets within range of the 15th AF. At the briefing we were told that 1100 anti-aircraft guns of 88 MM and 105MM caliber would be counted on to give some opposition. What an understatement. I had flown three previous missions to Ploesti and one to the refineries port of Potes-ti, and was very familiar with the smoke pots that screened 100 square miles of target area. We were assigned to a new B-24J Pathfinder aircraft that aimed the bomb drop by radar. With all that smoke we needed something.

**" Mickey Ships," carried the radar scanner in the place of the ball turret.**

Pathfinder aircraft usually carried the radar scanner in the place of the ball turret, meaning we had two less guns for fighter defense. Preflight was normal, but without the comradeship of our well knit crew #36 where everyone's strengths and weaknesses are known it was like being alone with nine other men.

**Flying with a new crew was like being alone with nine other men.**

Crew #36 had been to Cairo on R &R and a fortune teller told the Bombardier that he would be wounded and some of this crew were offering 10 to 1 odds that

it would happen on this mission. It was enough to make one a little more apprehensive than the usual pre-mission dreading.

Combat equipment was loaded including the "jewel" pots\*, these being standard steel helmets that airmen sat on when the flak got thick. One tended to pucker from your feet up to your crotch, hence the name

"Jewel" pot. Of course the pilot and co-pilot could not afford this luxury.

Take off, climb and cruise was normal as we watched the 15th AF form behind us. It was quite a majestic sight. We proceeded on course to Ploesti. I checked the fuel supply equipment and my position at the right waist gun. My job was to transfer fuel from the out-board reserve or Tokyo tanks after the bomb run when we were out of flak range. By burning this off in a designated manner, weight and balance was improved and helped to prevent an outer wing panel from being blown off if it was hit by subsequent anti-aircraft fire while still containing fuel. The other consideration was that the so-called engineers at Consolidated Aircraft forgot to install fuel quantity gauges for these tanks.

