



484th Bomb Group aircraft in distress. Fuel pours out behind number one engine .

secret and was not to be repeated. If it falls into the hands of the wrong people, it can be of some aid to the enemy and can help them in their future attempt to get our boys. I can't see how myself, but they should know, so I figure it isn't worth the chance. I do ask you to destroy this letter and never to refer to it in any conversation. OK? Thanks.

As I think you know, our target was Weiner-Neustadt, Austria, and it was one of the toughest targets we had at the time. Our group had been there twice before and our squadron had lost planes in each attempt. In fact it was the only place we had lost any planes up until that time. In the other two missions to this target we were not allowed to go, being the staff

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crew, we only flew when our group or wing was leading, instead of being able to fly when we wanted to. We only flew when group HQ told us we could. It worked out that it was about one mission in five that we were allowed to fly. When this same target came up for the third time, the Major (Haldeman) just wouldn't let them go without us, although we were ordered to stay on the ground.

The Major, Ray, and myself, were afraid the other crews were using our position to keep from going to that target. In other words we were afraid they would think that we were yellow, and that would never do. So the Major demanded of the Colonel, for us to be allowed to go. He finally gave us permission, but because the lead crew had already been chosen and prepared, we merely lead an element, not the group. But we were there and we showed them the kind of stuff their CO was made of. I think you know that if the Major had said to Ray and myself

that we were going to the moon, we would have said, "Yes, Sir," and climbed in behind him and never doubted for a minute but what we were indeed going to the moon.

Anyhow, when we saw the target, it was everything we heard it was and more. We had seen enemy flak before, lots of it, and we had seen enemy fighters before, lots of them too, I have never seen so much of both in any one spot, and I hope never to see it again. I just don't have words at my disposal to describe the scene, but I can remember thinking that I couldn't see how any of us were going to come out of it alive. However regardless of what was ahead of us, there was no turning back, we had a job to do, a target to destroy, so in we went. I guess I was never so scared and never prayed so hard before in my life, and I guess too, it was not all in vain.

We completed our bomb run and saw the bombs hit the target and had just started our turn to the right off of the target, when our troubles began. A terrific burst of flak hit us somewhere near the co-pilot's seat. I don't know just where. I do know it killed Deak, our co-pilot and our top turret gunner, Marchi. It also hit the Major in his arm and got me in both legs.

As I said, we had just become committed to a right turn as planned, but this burst dropped us about 5000 feet and put us into a left turn. With the co-pilot gone, the recovery of the plane was up to the Major, and he had only one arm in good shape, but somehow he was able to get the ship organized and straightened out. But the trouble being that we were turning left at about 18,000 feet, and the group was turning right about a mile above us. It would have been impossible to attempt to turn right and rejoin the group because we were miles away from them at this time. The Major decided to keep going to the left turn and rejoin them at the end of the turn. To clear this up, it sounds confusing to me, I'll draw a diagram on the top of the next page and attempt to show you what was up.



Major Haldeman, taken during flight training at Randolph Field, Texas. March 1940