

Messerschmitt factory and airdromes. Our group hit the North airfield with frags. About 30 enemy fighters were concentrating on our group as we approached the target, attacking from the front and rolling away to the rear. By the time I saw them from the tail turret they were practically out of range, the combined speed of the fighter and the bomber being well over 500 mph. When we got to the target the fighters left and the flak was there. The sky over the target was full of it, and it didn't seem possible that we could fly through it. We started taking hits all over the plane. Shrapnel came through the bottom of my turret and rattled around me but wasn't hit. The track carrying the ammo to the turret was cut off, but didn't realize this until we got out of the flak area and the fighters came at us again. I started shooting and after firing a few bursts the guns quit. I kept the guns and turret moving anyway to make the fighters think I was still in business. The B-24 on our right dropped back and started down. I counted ten chutes. Another was spinning and burning. There were no chutes from this one. Our P-51's were coming in now and there were dog fights all around us, and a lot of the fighters were going down too. A few P-38's were out there also, and I saw one turn into a ball of fire. The ME 109's had left us by now thanks to our escort. A Liberator from another Group slid in behind us with an engine out. We were having engine trouble too and were dropping behind the formation so we "escorted" the other B-24 back to Italy and luckily weren't spotted by any of the Luftwaffe. Jug made a remark back at the base that I'll never forget. He said when the IO9's were coming in their guns looked as big as G.I. cans. We got 33 new holes on this mission.

13 May 1944

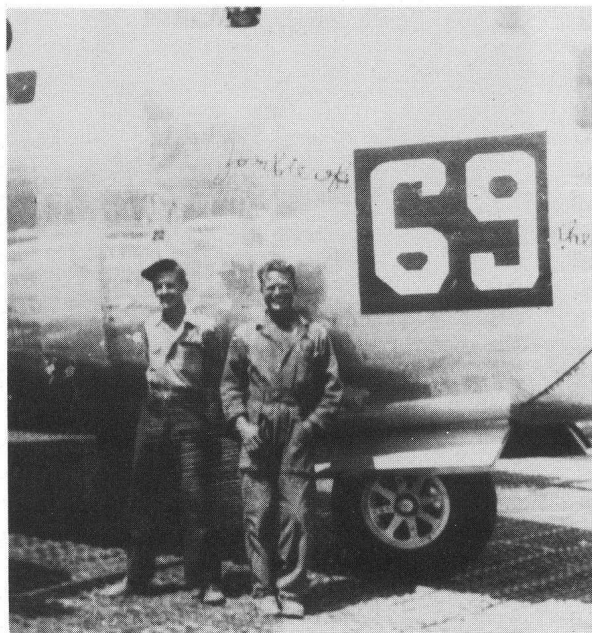
Bologna, Italy. Marshalling yards. Milk run.

17 May, 1944

La Spezia harbor area. Light flak. No fighters.

18 May, 1944

Seven hundred heavies were sent out to make the first direct attack by the Fifteenth on oil refineries at Ploesti. The weather was bad and although some got through and hit the target, our Group and some others hit the secondary target of



This is the second #69. The first went down with a replacement crew aboard. I never found out who they were. Wonder if our ex POW's flew #69 on her last mission. Jim Mackin claims to have seen this plane "Zombie of '69" The First at Smyrna. Ball Gunner Jim Mackin is shown in the co/pilot's seat, Tail Gunner Wally Robinson is at left and Seth McKinney Crew Chief is at right.

Belgrade. Only fourteen bombers were lost. A good percentage.

22 May 1944

La Spezia. Carried 40 incendiary bombs. Moderate flak, although we got a hit in the wing that damaged the main spar. I don't wear my flak vest in the customary manner anymore. After that Wiener Neustadt raid the other day where the flak was coming up all around me, I decided that I'd sooner sit on the vest.

25 May, 1944

Toulon, France. Marshalling yards. Milk run.

27 May, 1944

Southern France. Airdromes. Heavy accurate flak in two areas. Lost another plane full of friends today. Three tents out of four in our area are empty now. I hear some new crews are coming in tomorrow. We got holed through the waist and bomb bay door today. Nothing serious.

29 May, 1944

Wiener Neustadt, Austria. The flak was still there and just as terrifying as our last trip there. Our fighter escort did a much better job this time however in keeping the Germans away from the main formation. We watched the dog fights, and saw the planes falling, and the parachutes from some. Three of our Group went down but I could only count about five or six chutes from them. We came back without a scratch.

31 May, 1944

Ploesti, Romania. Concordia Vega oil refineries. Heavy flak and much Luftwaffe. Two of ours went down in the mountains shortly after leaving the target area. We took only one hit. The top turret got holed but the Greek wasn't hurt. There were stragglers all over on the way home, and after landing we watched them come, with their red flares arcing. One Lib. came in real nice but as soon as the wheels touched the ground we could see the one tire shred off, and the main gear collapse. She ground looped and spun down the field with parts flying off. There was no fire so I guess most if not all survived. The last straggler came over the field about a thousand feet or so and the crew bailed out. I never found out what became of the pilot or the plane.

*There is a much published photograph of this mission, and also a Department of Defense painting taken from the photo. (I have an original photograph.)

2 June, 1944

Marshalling yards 55 miles east of Budapest, Hungary. The flak was light and there were no fighters.