

P-38 had an attrition rate (whatever that is) of 25.1 percent of unit equipment compared to the P-51's 17.8 percent. 8AF SS, 63.

23. The significance of the oil targets was their rugged defenses and subsequent American bomber losses. The Fifteenth lost the greatest number of bombers against this target system (804 of 2,356 lost) and nearly its highest percentage of losses (3.11 percent). Only industrial targets claimed a greater percentage (3.12 percent). Against Ploesti, the Fifteenth lost 276 heavy bombers on twenty missions, 5.24 percent. More precisely, the Eighth dropped 31 percent of its bombs on industrial targets, 34 percent on transportation, 20.8 percent on tactical (plus 4.5 percent on V-weapons targets), and 5.9 percent on shipping and U-boat targets, leaving 3.8 percent on miscellaneous targets. The Fifteenth dropped respectively on the first four categories: 24.2, 51.6, 20.9, and 4.1. 8AF SS, 38, 39; 15AF SS, 2-7, 10; AAF Evaluation Board Report, vol. 6, "Ploesti"; "The Air Battle of Ploesti"; "Fifteenth Air Force Attacks on Ploesti."

24. The tonnage came to 260,000 tons on oil targets and factories, and 280,000 tons on land transportation in Germany. (The AAF strategic air forces dropped a total of 603,000 tons on land transportation). USSBS, Statistical Appendix to Over

AII Report (European War), February 1947, 1, 20, 49, 52, 53, 57; 8AF SS, 38, 39; 15AF SS, 2, 4-6.

25. 8AF SS, 40-44; 15AF SS, 2, 10.

26. To be precise, the Eighth dropped 49.7 percent of its bombs with non visual methods, the Fifteenth, 18.5 percent. 8AF SS, 21; 15AF SS, 12.

27. Ibid.

28. USSBS, "Daylight Bombing Accuracy," 23; 8AF SS, 21; 15AF SS, 12. Based on my research, I believe the actual accuracy was less than these figures.

29. In 4-5/10s cloud cover, half landed within 1 mile; in 6-7/10s conditions, half within 1.3 miles; and with 8-9/10s cover, half within 2 miles. Eighth Air Force Tactical Development, August 1942-May 1945, 72.

30. A 1944 study indicated that formations protected by carpet averaged 1.5 percent losses compared to 14.1 percent losses in unprotected formations. Air Ministry, Radio Countermeasures in Support of Offensive Operations (Europe), Air Staff monograph no. 1, April 1945, 20-24; Alfred Price, *The History of U.S. Electronic Warfare*, vol. I (Westford, Mass.: Association of Old Crows, 1984), 83, 99; Eighth Air Force, Operations Analysis Section, "Analysis of Window and Chaff Protection for Months of

Oct-30 Nov 1944," 5; Alfred Price, *Battle Over the Reich* (New York: Scribner's, 1973), 57-70; Air Ministry, *Rise and Fall of the German Air Force* (London: Air Ministry, 1948?), 271-79; James Baxter 111, *Scientists Against Time* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1946), 93-94, 164; Irving Holley, *Buying Aircraft: Materiel Procurement for the Army Air Forces* (Washington: GPO, 1964), 180; Alfred Price, *Instrument of Darkness* (London: Kimber, 1967), 112, 117, 141-42, 164; Ist Operations Analysis Section "Evaluation of Anti-Flak Radar Countermeasures Fifteenth Air Force," October 1944; Folder, Carpet Messages.

31. Eighth Air Force Mission Folders, 20-25 February 1944; Craven and Cate, 3:43-44; Intops nos. 215-19 (20-25 February 1944).

32. The Fifteenth's fighters posted a claims-to-total-loss ratio of 1.7:1, while the Eighth's ratio was 2.5:1. Although I do not know that the two units were using the same criteria, I believe the general trend of a lower claim ratio and higher loss ratio for the Fifteenth's fighters is correct, even if not precisely what these numbers indicate. 8AF SS, 16; 15AF SS, 8, 12, 15.33. Mellor to author.

The End

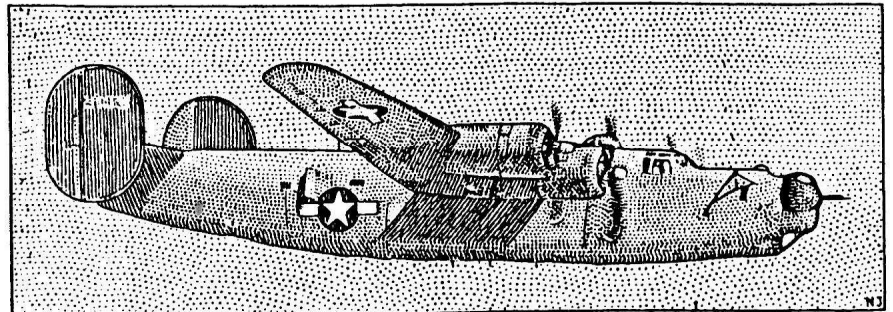
Remembering an Old Warrior

Letters to the Editor, Wall Street Journal

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Editor's Note!

These letters are included in this edition in support of the B-24 Liberator as a viable fighting machine. Readers are encouraged to add their remarks pro or con to this as perhaps the oldest controversy still lingering on from World War II. Was the B-24 better or worse than the B-17? Also comments on which air force was best, the 8th or 15th are solicited from members and readers.



Syosset, N.Y.

As a former flight leader in the 445th Bombardment Group of the Eighth Air Force in World War II, I should like to comment on both the March I advertisement of General Dynamics Corp. seeking contributions for restoration of a B-24 Liberator and the March 23 letter from Murray Grainger, whose description of the B-24's flight characteristics and mechanical deficiencies I believe not to be universally valid.

As a pilot in the same group as Jimmy Stewart (the actor), I completed 30 missions over Western Europe from England, pilot-

ing a number of Liberators in low-level attacks (D-day and the St. Lo Breakout) and high-altitude missions to target cities such as Munich, Berlin and Hamburg, the latter two defended by 900 and 600 anti-aircraft guns, respectively. On several occasions we thanked God we were flying a B-24 because of its highly efficient Pratt & Whitney engines and twin-finned tail assemblage.

When my B-24 lost two of its four engines and part of its tail due to German resistance over Hamburg, I still was able to return to base in England by joining a group of slower-flying B-17 Flying Fortresses. On