



Stan Hutchins, Fall 1944

Col Gunn is Back

By
Stan Hutchins 824-060



Capt. Carl Cantacuzino (Left) and U. Col. James Gunn 111 (right) celebrate Gunn's return from POW camp on the 27th of August, 1944. Cantacuzino flew the Me-109 that brought Col. Gunn to San Giovanni Airfield.

captors of some 1,100 U. S. and RAF airmen, mostly 15th AF, but some veterans of the 1 August 1943 low level raid, opened the POW camp gates and discreetly walked away.

An alert USAAFPOW, Lt. Col. James A. Gunn, talked the ambivalent remaining Rumanians into furnishing a plane and a pilot to fly him back to Italy to arrange a wholesale rescue of the "freed" prisoners. The initial attempt of 25 August 1944 had to be aborted since the war-weary Savoia-Marchetti developed engine trouble shortly after takeoff.

Finally, on, August 27, 1944, a Rumanian Air Force Me 109 piloted by Capt. Carl Cantacuzino with Col. Gunn squeezed in behind the pilot—popped into sight a few hundred feet above the southern Italian land-

August 1944 was an exciting time for those of us in strategic bombing operations out of southern Italy. We flew everywhere — the Black Sea, the beaches of southern France, the depths of Luftwaffe fighter country around Vienna, Austria. The last four bombing missions to the Ploesti oil refineries were flown on the 10th, 17th, 18th and 19th August. The bad news was that German ground and air strength was still very potent and "testy" in the Bucharest area, so much so that they were beating up on their Rumanian colleagues for merely contemplating a surrender to Soviet forces now massing for the final push into the refineries. Daily, we gathered in the S-2 office to watch the posting of the latest advance by Soviet forces. Unknowing to us, on about 23 August, the Rumanian



ME 109 F with American flag flown out of Ploesti Rumania on 26 August, 1944 by Capt Cantacuzino. Rumanian Air Force Ace with Lt Col Gunn stowed in the radio compartment.