
unobserved. On this mission our group was attacked by fighters. Between 30 and 40 of them attacked the formation just as our escort left. We didn't lose any planes to them, while knocking down 7 of their planes.

Mission 133, 18 December 1944, Blechhammer South Oil Refinery, Germany

It was another Pathfinder mission. A 10/10 undercast over the target made it necessary for the bomb run to be made on instruments. Results were again unobserved, but it was thought that they were good. 19 aircraft dropped 33 tons of bombs on the target.

Mission 134, 19 December 1944, Blechhammer South Oil Refinery, Germany

After bombing the North Refinery on December 19, the South refinery was the target on the 20th. This mission was a duplication of the one going before. The target was bombed by pathfinder, and again results were believed to be good, although they were unobserved. 18 tons of bombs were dropped.

Mission 135, 20 December 1944 Linz M/Y's, Austria

On this mission Linz was the third alternate target. It was bombed by pathfinder when a 10/10 undercast obscured the target area. Again results were thought to be good, although they were unobserved. 34 tons of bombs were dropped.

Mission 136, 25 December 1944, Villach, Austria

36 aircraft took off to bomb Brux, but because of heavy overcast, the aircraft became divided. One aircraft bombed at Villach, one at Wels Austria and the rest returned their bombs to base. The mission was unsuccessful, but all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 137, 27 December 1944, Venzone Viaduct, Italy

This mission was one of the first in which the weather was clear over the target. Results were good although the bombardier in the first box had a malfunction. The bombs seemed to straddle the viaduct. 75 tons of bombs were dropped on this target which was a very important part of the communications system from Vienna though Villach into Italy.

Mission 138, 28 December 1944, Venzone R/R Bridge, Italy

This target was very close to the one which the group attacked the preceding day. The weather was clear again and, again the objective was badly damaged.

Mission 139, 29 December 1944, Passau M/Y's, Austria

The last target of the month was the Passau M/Y's a rail center on the most direct line from central Germany to Vienna. It was particularly important at this time because the enemy was trying to avoid using the facilities at Munich. Although the target was cloud covered, 54 tons of bombs were dropped in a good concentration.

This was the last mission flown by the group for the year 1944.

Winter Problems

The coming of winter with its rain and snow brought about a sharp reduction in operational flying. With non military motor and foot travel on the bumpy muddy Italian road practically at a standstill, it became necessary to keep the men occupied during leisure time.

The study classes which began slowly in the early fall came into their own and all squadrons had increased attendance. The studies covered a wide range of subjects from practical work to a class on psychology. Evening news talks became a popular indoor sport and the S-2 briefing room had standing room only during these sessions.

The group theater made in Nissen hut style with bomb stands as seats was the scene of an unusual show by the men of the group. The show performed on two nights and received much praise.

December saw the completion of most of the tufa stone houses and winterizing of tents. Men situated in more advantageous spots for supplies of various kinds built (with Italian labor and their own help) houses that were almost a bit of home in Italy. Each tent or house had its own improvised fuel stove or fireplace and when the smoke was pouring out of the stove pipes in the different squadrons, the area looked like Pittsburgh.

Christmas in Italy

A few months earlier no one would have bet on its happening. But here we were, and with Christmas trees brought down by Special Service from the Manfredonia mountain area, the Yule tide spirit was in evidence everywhere. Packages from home (mostly with food) arrived in huge numbers and with a delicious Christmas dinner served by squadron messes, the inner man was satisfied. Master sergeants, full of the right spirit, took over KP duties, and also had to take a lot of kidding.

The year 1944 ended in a high spirited celebration perhaps in the belief that 1945 would see the end of European hostilities. Every man in the group felt that it had been a year of achievement both in training and in combat.

Awards and Decorations for December 1944

484th Bomb Group HQ

DFC

Maj. Nathan Sutin (Oak leaf cluster)

Bronze Star

M/Sgt. Harold J McCarthy

824 Squadron

DFC

Maj. Claude A Trotter

Capt. George Ponty (Oak leaf cluster)

Capt. Wilson Be Wilkes (Oak leaf cluster)

Capt. George F Murphy (Oak leaf cluster)

1st Lt. George R Gilpin

1st Lt. Don L Kavanaugh

1st Lt. Lawrence Weakley