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I just about held on to the rope on the side of the rubber boat. I was weak and I couldn't hold on and I went under, Frigo and Elsesser grabbed me and pulled me aboard. The plane stayed afloat briefly, then broke up in 4 places and sank. I started to upchuck and couldn't stop. All ten of us were safe and I think the Lord helped us there a lot. We started to paddle toward shore, and could see the mountains. About 3:30 PM the fog started closing in. We heard a high powered launch and when it cut its engines we shot off our 45's and blew the whistles that were in the boat and we kept paddling toward shore where we heard artillery fire and we thought we were near the front lines. We saw a launch about a mile away paralleling us so we blew our whistles and waved and they finally headed toward us. At this point we didn't know whether it was British or German air sea rescue when we heard some one shout "Hey you chaps want a lift?" They took us below and dried us off and gave us dry clothes and a tot of Rum and we all felt a lot better. It was 6:15 PM when they picked us up later docking at Ancona around 11 PM. When we were still out to sea the fog that had started closed in and now on land it was even thicker. They put us up for the night in a British Casualty Station. On Friday Feb 9, 1945 a 825th ship came for us. It sure felt good to get back home again."

Ralph Christensen and I were on the same plane to the same target, but he experienced things and remembered aspects differently. On 5 February, 1945, our crew was assigned a brand new shiny B-24J that had been ferried to our base. We took it up for one training flight on the day before and found it suited us very well. It had those new car smells that old B-24s that we had been using, had lost. The crew was pretty happy with the new plane.

On the 5 Feb 1945, we got our early wake-up call. There were five noncoms living in the tent that originally included Eddie Yurochko. The replacement for Eddie was James Pope, who was a transfer from the 8th AAF in England. He was located in another tent as we had a temporary crew member living in Eddie's space, named Elman S. Sjotsvedt. He had been a survivor of a B-24 that crashed on the approach to the landing strip at Vis and had several broken bones to heal stronger before he could fly again. They wouldn't send him to the zone of the interior, as he hadn't flown but one or two missions. His knick name was Shot. When we didn't return to base the same day, he wound up playing guard to any supplies left behind. He reported when we returned how the scavenger types were surprised to find him in their way.

After an early breakfast, we went from the chow line to the S-2 Briefing shack, where we saw the route and the turning points, and what intelligence could tell us about fighters and flak guns. We hung our mess gear on pegs to be picked up later in the day when we returned. We and other crews climbed aboard trucks for the ride to the flight line.

The truck ride from 825 Squadron to the flight line covered about three miles. Everyone on our crew picked up the gear at the supply shack needed for the mission. This included a parachute and harness, flak vest and helmet, electric suit with electric boots and gloves that would plug to the suit, and also an emergency kit with maps, a compass, and money. These items were added to those in the flight bag that carried what had been personally fitted, such as the oxygen face mask, goggles, flight cap, gloves, and boots. The B-2 bag was heavier now, and after carrying all this to plane #34, the crew lined up at each engine to help the engineer pull the engines through several turns by rotating the blades by hand as far as one blade would go. This was a team effort that used the crew men who were not pilots. When this was done, each of us had our

last minute chores, like finding a relief station or latrine. When it was time to start the engines, everyone got on board, except for the engineer who was responsible for being near each engine with a fire extinguisher. Once the engines were idling, we were ready to taxi into line for take off. When our B-24 with the big #34 taxied into place at the south end of the runway, the pilot set the brakes and began revving up each engine individually and when each had been able to reach max rpm for take off, the pilot pushed the throttles to all four engines and released the brakes.

The rest of this crew became passengers once we reached the end of the taxi way. No one was allowed to stay in the nose or in a turret at takeoff or landing. Usually, we found a good place to sit down with our back against a bulkhead. Sometimes you would let the vibrations massage you and sometimes you repeated the Lord's prayer. There was no talking now as everyone was inside of himself. A fully loaded B-24 would gross about 71,000 pounds. There would be 2,700 gallons of 100 octane in the main wing tanks and for this flight, we carried one and a half tons, or possibly two tons, of 500 pound H.D. bombs. The History of the 484th Bomb Group showed that 36 aircraft took off for this mission, some ships aborted. The average load was 1.83 tons, or if the tonnage is divided by 32 planes, the average load was 2 tons.

As our ship #34 raced down the runway developing lift, the rattle of the steel mats began changing tune. It was proof that we were nearing lift off. When we were crossing the middle area where there was no matting, we had reached flying speed, but the pilot was holding the nose down and trying to get more speed. Then when we heard the matting on the other end we were afraid this meant that we would crash with all that gasoline and bombs. The plane was trying to fly and the air speed seemed right but we were not taking off.

The pilot, Lt. Kaiser, could see that he was running out of runway and had only one thing to do. He pulled the nose up and we were climbing rapidly. Once we were airborne, we then heard that the problem was an air speed indicator. This problem meant that with the air speed a variable in flight might cause more problems once we formed up and headed for altitude. After the first hour of flight, we had trouble keeping our place in the formation diamond. We would slide out to one side and then back. We couldn't slow down, but we could speed up.

We should have returned to base and tried to solve the problem on the ground, but that meant no mission count and we were getting anxious. This may explain why we felt that way. On Jan. 4, 1945, we made our first mission since returning from Benkovac after our plane was shot down. On 9 January 1945, we flew for 3 hours and 45 minutes before all aircraft was recalled on account of bad weather. On 15 January 1945, we flew with the formation for 2 hours and 20 minutes, before aborting and returning to base. On 19 January 1945, we flew for 6 hours and 30 minutes with a plane that couldn't keep up, for a target at Brod. My Individual Flight Record show that we flew on 23 January 1945, for 3 hours and 50 minutes; on 28 January 1945, for 3 hours; and on 31 January 1945, for 4 hours and 30 minutes. The crew was feeling like aborting was the only thing we could do, until we were assigned to the new B-24.

Sometime in the first four days of February, the crew flew a check ride in the new plane. What ever caused the air speed indicator to malfunction, must have occurred after the training flight and before we began the run for take off speed early on the Fifth day of February. We were going to Regensburg and in order to stay with