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Dear Russell:

I am enclosing my check for \$20<sup>00</sup> for my copy of "First Over Germany". I am eagerly looking forward to receiving it. I am taking the precaution of having it sent to my P.O. Box as I think it will be safer.

I am taking the liberty of sending you some photocopies of my crew, some Bedford scenes plus copies of orders that sent me back to the states. I had volunteered for another tour of duty (35 missions more) in return for 30 days home plus travel time. Eventually, the Existed Men's orders were cancelled but the Officers were returned to England. I ended up at Instructors School and later taught Preventive Maintenance at Gulfport, Miss.

I went back to England in 1963 and visited our base at Thurleigh. It was a very hush-hush place and the guards would not permit me to enter at the time. The only view I could get was from a low hill nearby and things didn't look the same. I enjoyed the visit anyway and hope to go back again.

Take care of yourself and thank you for "First Over Germany".

yours very truly  
Eugene A. Kiley

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# AIR CLASSICS

## TWENTY-NINE MISSIONS OVER EUROPE B-17 war diary



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# Twenty-nine missions over EUROPE

## part I

**A Flying Fortress Radio Operator/Gunner's diary recalls the harrowing air battles over Occupied Europe**

By Eugene A. Kiley

**H**ow do you get to be a Radio Operator/Gunner in the United States Army Air Force? All you need is a war and a lot of luck.

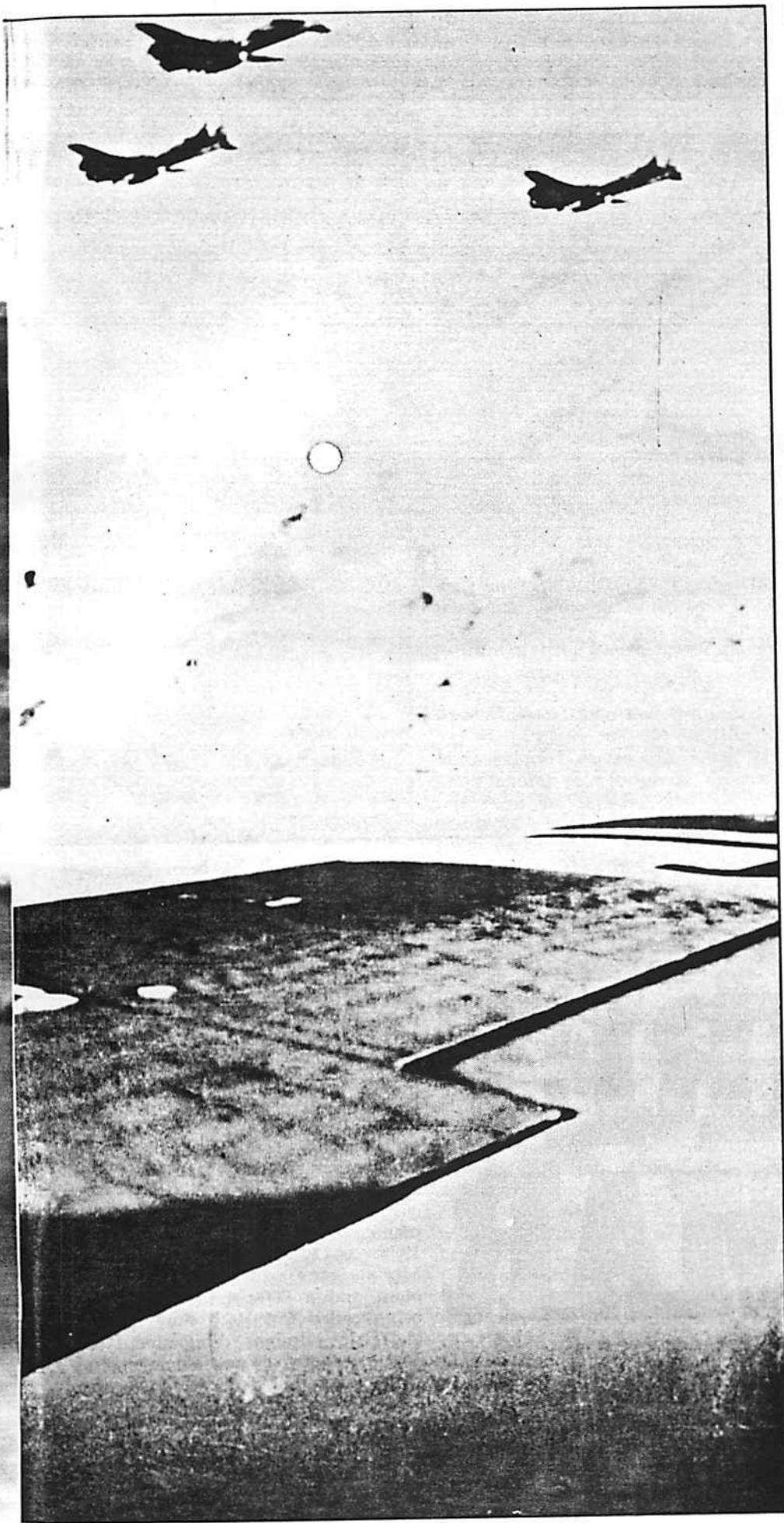
I was going through Basic Training in Miami Beach, Florida, when I was called in for a series of examinations and tests. When it was completed, an NCO interviewed me and told me how great I did. I was meant to be a Radio Operator and the test proved it.

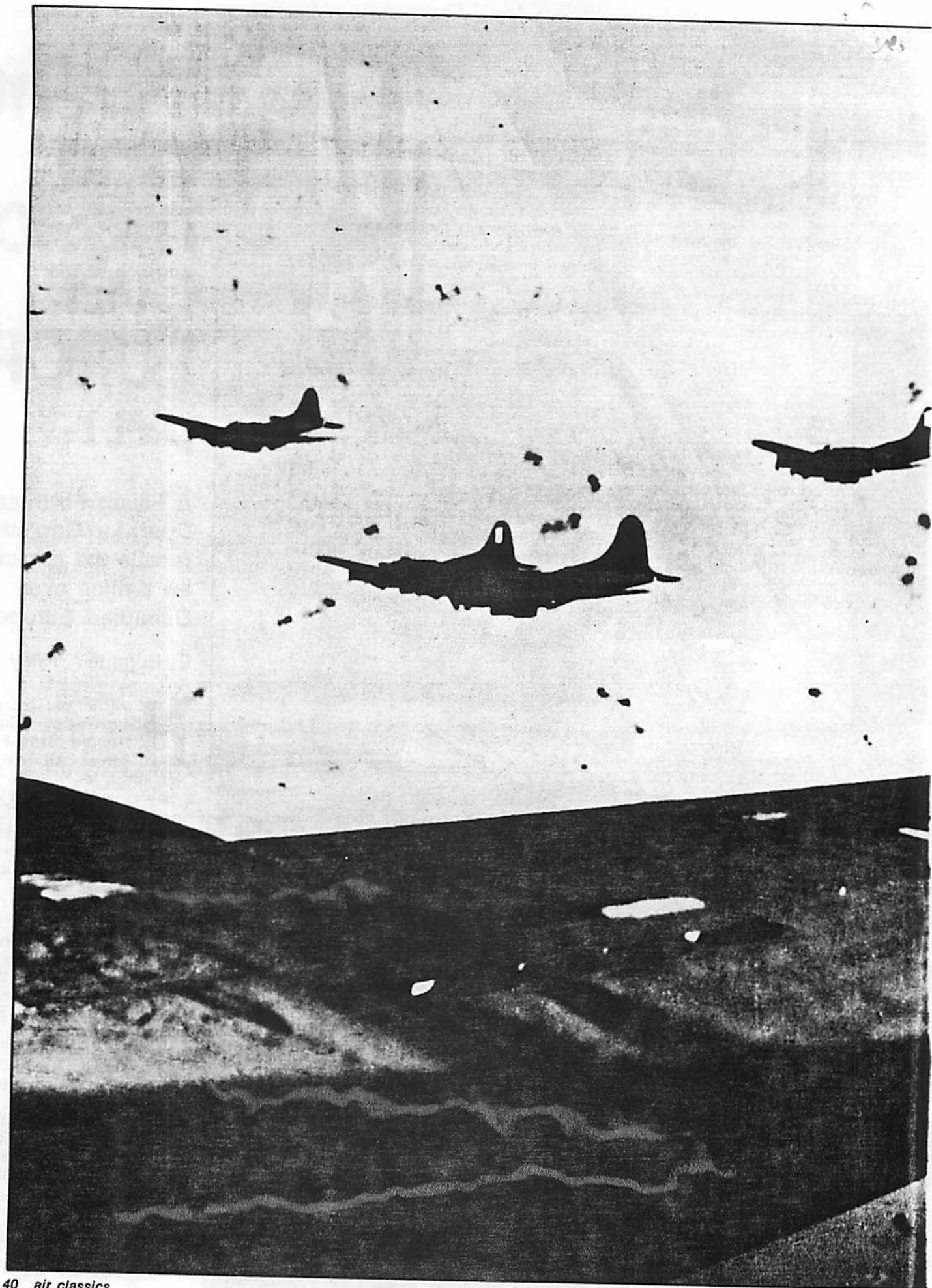
This was not the job I was looking for. I told him I wanted to gas up the planes before they left and do the same when they came back. Then he trapped me. Radio School would be at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and I'd be close to Yonkers, New York, where I lived. I'd be able to get home on pass and see my wife-to-be. I fell for it.

On 25 November 1942, Thanksgiving Day, I arrived in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Needless to say, I hated that G.I. back in Miami Beach more than the enemy. We arrived

*Flak was a deadly enemy of the majestic Fortress formations as they fought through European skies.*

(Continued on page 58)





# Twenty-nine missions

(Continued from page 41)

too late for the big turkey dinner and had to settle for whatever they could "come up with" in the Mess Hall.

Radio School was on three shifts and I drew the midnight till dawn one. What a mixed-up way to live! Breakfast at dinner time, and dinner at breakfast time. Snow, snow and more snow! I spent New Year's Eve in the Base Hospital with pneumonia. It may be unbelievable but I left home for this!

All things end in time. I graduated from Radio School, 28 April, 1943. At last, I was a qualified Radio Operator/Mechanic. Nothing to do but wait for my next assignment. On 5 May 1943, I became a Corporal. I was so thrilled, I couldn't wait to sew on my stripes. I was moving up the ranks to God knows where.

Eighth of May 1943, saw me on my way to Gunnery School which I wanted nothing to do with. I was told I volunteered and that was enough to put me in an asylum. I didn't want to be a Gunner, but I didn't have much choice. So, on 12 May, there I was in Kingman, Arizona.

It wasn't long before I made my first gunnery mission in a Beech AT-11. I was scared but even more afraid of getting air sick. One of the

students had thrown up all over the ammo and that made it rough feeding the machine gun. Finally, after surviving the heat (126°) and a short stay at Yucca, Arizona, for advanced gunnery, I completed school.

On 17 July I was promoted to "Buck" Sergeant and graduated as an Aerial Gunner. I was now a qualified Radio Operator/Mechanic/Gunner and climbing the promotion ladder fast. I didn't know where I would end up but found out quickly —COMBAT!

The troop train left Kingman on 13 July, heading for Salt Lake City, Utah, by a round-about-way. The stay in Salt Lake City was short and on 23 July, the train finally found its destination: Ephrata, Washington. My first impression of the Ephrata Air Base with its tents and rotten living conditions was "boy what a dump!" You could lie in your tent and watch the new crews slamming those B-17s into the hills. Well, this was the first phase of my combat training and I was stuck with it. I prayed I'd be assigned to a good crew with a pilot who knew how to fly.

The day came when I saw my name posted on the Operation's Bulletin Board. I was assigned to a Lt. Sutton's crew as Radio Operator. I looked over the other names but knew none of them. At 1100 hours, I met them and was really impressed . . . but time would tell.

We flew together that afternoon, then day and night. We would flop onto our cots at every chance—tired as hell. We were getting to know each other a little better, but confi-

dence in a bunch of strangers doesn't come easy.

We moved on through our second and third phase of combat training. We went to Geiger Field, then Pendleton, Oregon, and back to Geiger Field. Promotion to Staff Sergeant came on 16 September.

On 20 October, training completed, we were shipped to Grand Island, Nebraska, to pick up a B-17 Flying Fortress to transport to England. While getting ready, the weather over the Atlantic went sour and rather than chance the loss of badly needed bombers, we were sent to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. We boarded the *Queen Mary* and left New York on 15 November, my birthday.

Twenty-one November found us disembarking in Scotland. Soon, we experienced those famous words, "Got any gum Yank" from flocks of red-headed Scottish kids. Being a redhead myself, the gang had a great laugh on me. "Look at all that red hair—Kiley must have been here before."

We promptly boarded a train and headed south into "Merry Ole" England! The following day, we arrived at a place called Tilsend. We would remain here and await assignment to a B-17 Heavy Bombardment Group. Conditions at Tilsend were very primitive. It was a sea of mud. Our so-called living quarters had a pot-bellied stove, a wooden bed with mattress and pillow filled with wood chips. No innerspring mattresses and down pillows here. After all, war is supposed to be hell.

Our orders were finally cut and on 1 December, we arrived in Thurleigh, home of the 306th Bomb Group. The airfield was located about fifty-five miles northwest of London and 7¼ from the busy road-hub called Bedford. It had been an RAF base before the Americans took over.

While we awaited our Squadron assignment, the Forts returned from a mission and we saw what our warriors looked like. Tired, older looking than their years, but with typical Yankee humor gave us rookies the treatment. "You'll be sorry" they chanted. After seeing them, believe me, I was sorry to be there.

We were assigned to the 423rd Squadron whose insignia carried the title of the "Grim Reapers." The weeks that followed proved a disappointment for the entire crew. God, but we thought we'd be needed so badly we'd be tossed right into a B-17, its nose pointed toward Germany and told to go get 'em. In-

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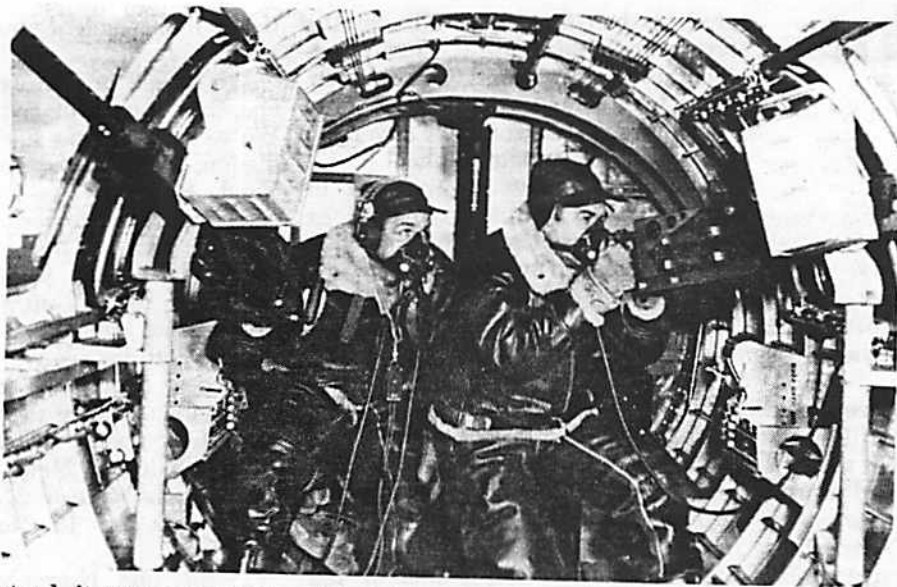
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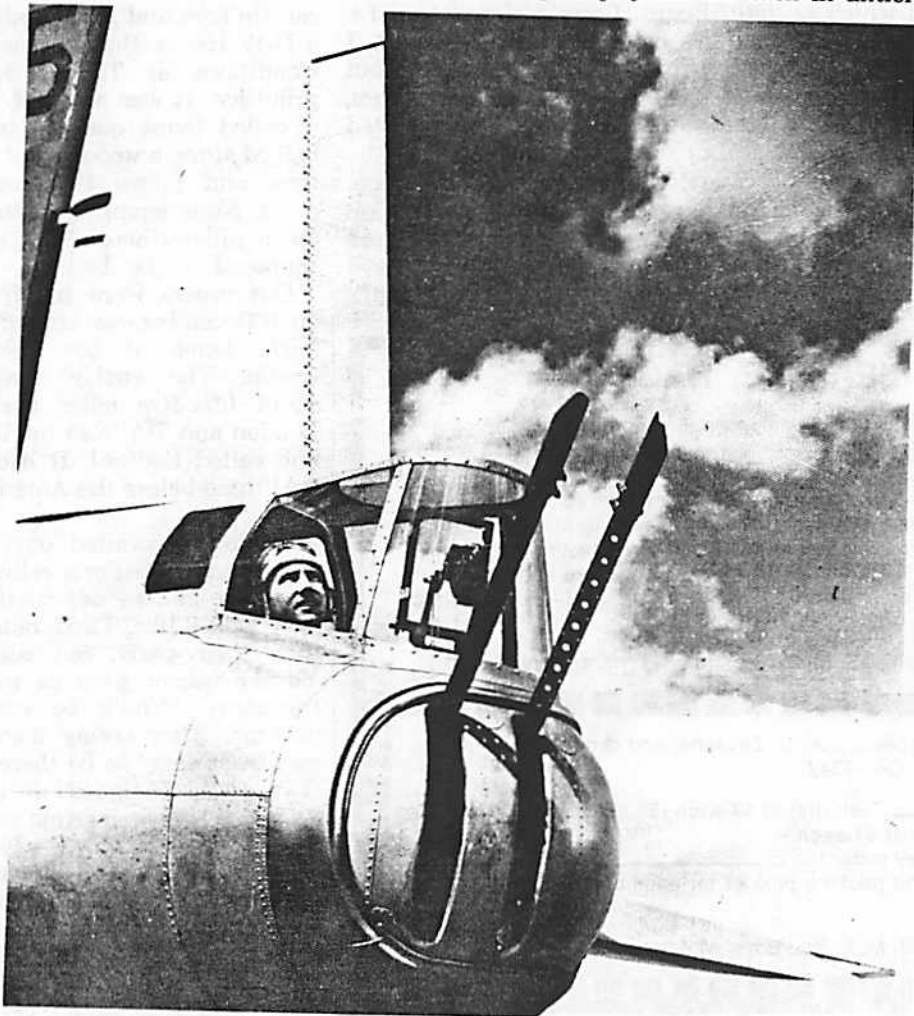
stead, it was more weeks of training. Ground school, formation flying and gunnery missions over the "Wash." This was our final tune-up before facing the enemy.

On the evening of 23 January, I stopped at Squadron HQ to look at the Bulletin Board. I was posted for tomorrow's mission but with another crew. I thought it crazy after all the training with nine other guys, my first mission was to be with total

*The side gunners in the B-17 braved 11ak, incredibly cold temperatures and faulty oxygen systems.*

strangers. I should have realized they were sending the rookie off with the veterans for his first mission so that some of their experience might rub off on him.

I promptly hit the sack in antici-



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pation of a pre-dawn call for briefing. I was nervous, in fact, I was damn scared and didn't sleep too well. What went through my mind were thoughts of home, my girl, all the things that had meant so much to me—they could all be gone tomorrow.

"OK. Up and at 'em. Briefing in a half hour." It was the CQ making his familiar morning round to get the boys up for the day's mission. It had become all too familiar, only this morning I was one of those boys.

I dressed, hopped on my bicycle and headed for the Mess Hall. I

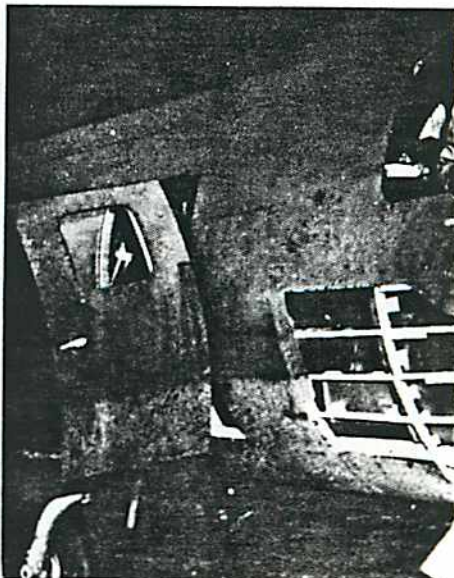
certainly didn't feel like a lot of food so breakfast was quick. I headed for the Briefing Hut and joined the sorriest-looking bunch of airmen you'd ever want to meet. At 0500 they didn't look like they could put up a good fight with a bunch of kids. But over enemy territory, I was going to see one tough group of Americans!

The stage was set, the curtain drawn and the target for today was Frankfurt, Germany. My eyes followed the ribbon from England to Frankfurt, and I couldn't help feel all was lost. How in the hell do we fly all that way without fighter escort? The Germans will have a field day knocking us out of the sky. This was to be my baptism of fire.

We went to our aircraft, took off, assembled high in the air, and headed for the English coast. We crossed the channel, tested our guns and started into France. Moments later, we were recalled—turned back to England and our base. The mission had been scrubbed due to bad weather over the target. After all the mental torment I'd given myself, I somehow wished we had gone on to the target. I felt as if I had flown the mission and should have at least gotten credit for one. The Air Force said no, the mission was incomplete.

My next call to battle was on 26 January. Target was Frankfurt again. This time, we didn't even get off the ground. The mission was again scrubbed. A few more like this and they'll have to give me a Section 8 and send me home. It was enough to drive a person out of their mind. An emotional buildup—with a very bad let-down.

*B-17 losses were particularly heavy in the early days of the strategic bombing offensive.*



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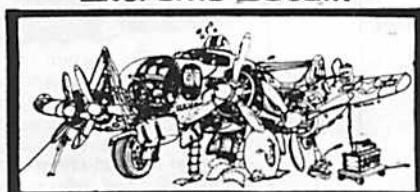
Twenty-nine January 1944, proved to be the day of my first bombing mission. The target was once again Frankfurt. I felt I could fly there with my eyes closed. Takeoff, assembly and just about everything went fine. We crossed the channel, tested our guns and headed into France. I was flying in ship #950 with a young pilot whose crew called him "Little Moe." He worried me from our first meeting. He was kind of a hot-shot pilot, a dare-devil who didn't seem to be afraid of anything.

We were about thirty minutes into enemy territory when we encountered enemy aircraft. FW-190s were spotted above and behind our group. I watched them swing around from the rear of the formation to a position at three o'clock high whence they came. The attack was on and no doubts about it. The FWs made only the one pass and did minor damage to our planes. They broke off the attack and went after the group behind us. I doubt if the forty or fifty rounds of ammo I fired did any more than stir up the air over Europe, but it did my morale a hell of a lot of good. I had fired at the enemy and apparently we had won the round. At last Frankfurt was in view and we went on to bomb the target. My first encounter with flak was a sickening sensation. At first I couldn't hear it because of the engines, but I could see it. It spit up from the guns on the ground in single bursts spotting the sky with yellowish brown mushrooms of smoke. Then, as the gunners lay their box barrage, I could hear the noise of the explosives. It sounded like a smothered roar. Suddenly, I felt like a sitting duck as we went into the target. The bombardier took over the plane and had to keep it perfectly straight over the bomb run.

He couldn't twist or turn to make the plane hard to hit. He was given forty seconds to aim and release his deadly cargo. Once the bombs were away, then the pilot took over with evasive action that could make the difference of life and death to the ten men on his crew. Flak was plentiful that day, but happily not intensive. We returned to base safely to find the Eighth Air Force had lost thirty-three bombers. Three hundred and thirty men dead, prisoners-of-war or trying to escape to safety.

(To be continued.)

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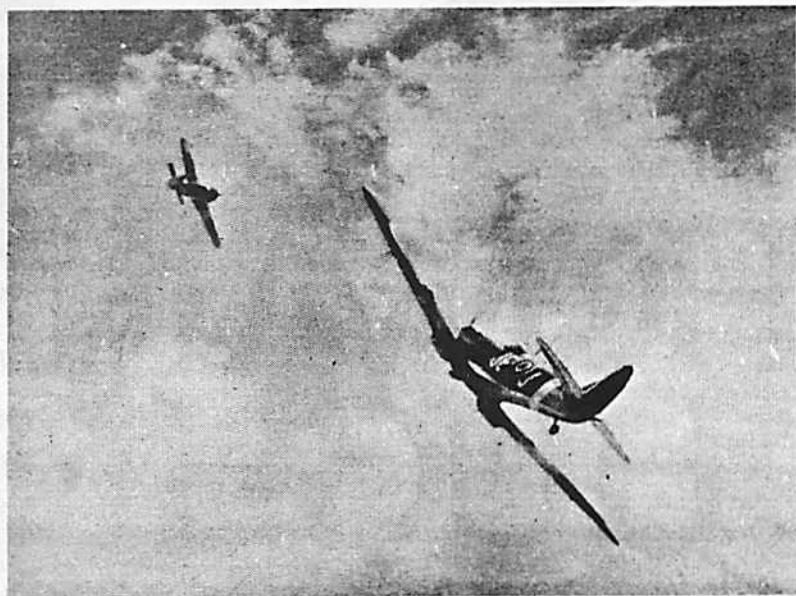


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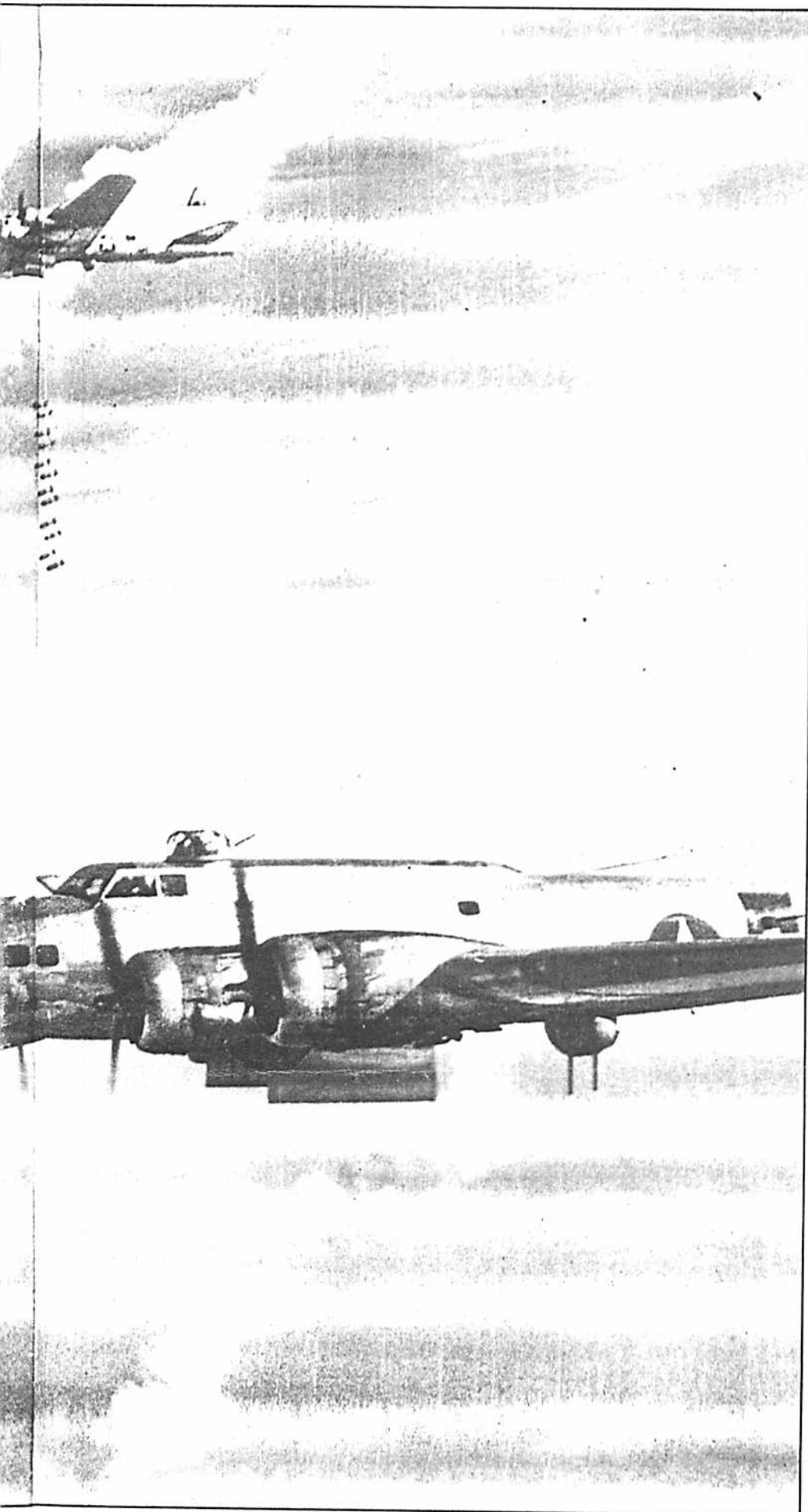
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# Twenty-nine missions over EUROPE

## PART TWO

**The flak-filled skies over Europe was not a healthy place for a WWII Flying Fortress crewman**

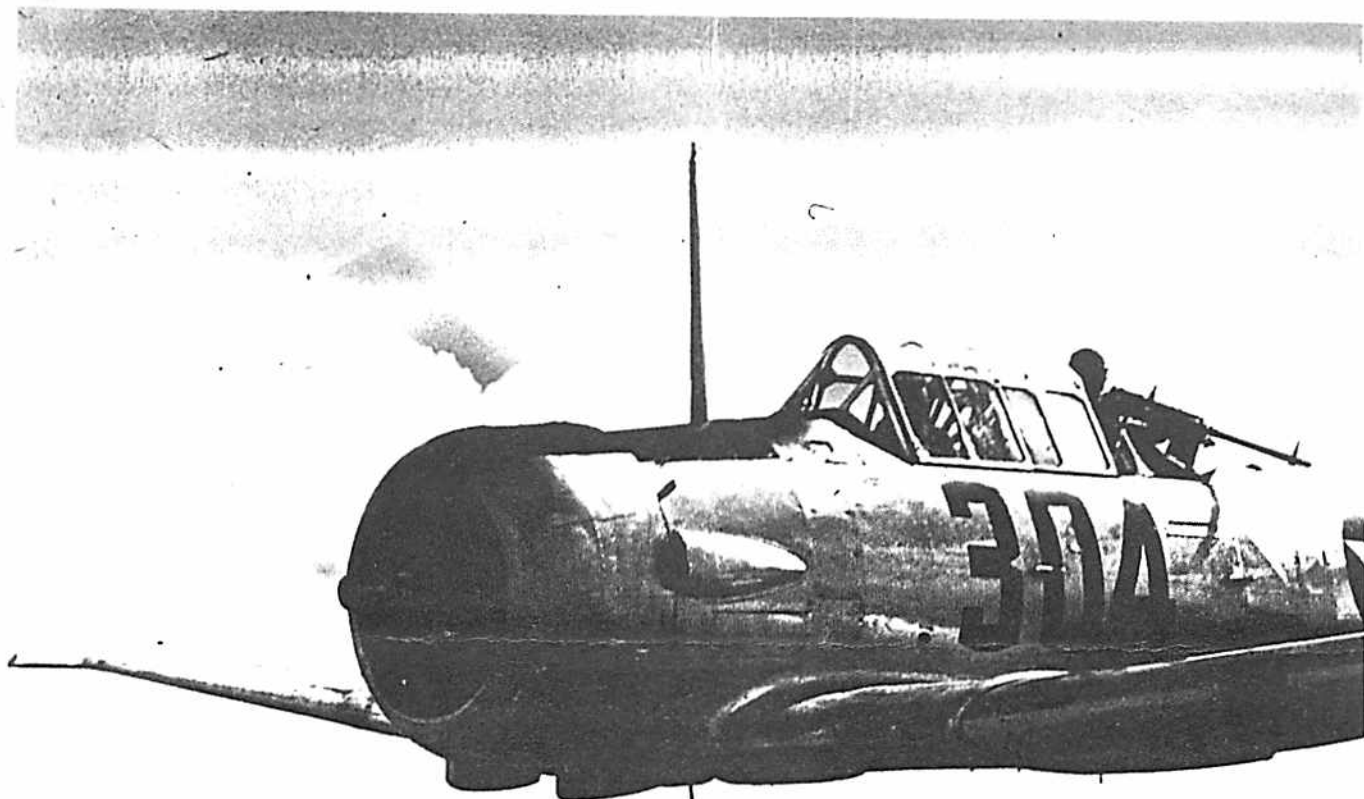
By Eugene A. Kiley

**T**he next day the boys went to Brunswick, Germany. The Eighth lost twenty-two bombers but none from our group. Our only casualty was from the 423rd. Sergeant Erickson was wounded. Everyone claimed he was over forty years old but he wanted to fight so his age was never questioned.

Thirty-one January and the target was Frankfurt. Mission was scrubbed. On 1 February we were briefed for Frankfurt and again scrubbed. Reports from Intelligence claimed Frankfurt was still burning from our last raid and many Germans had committed suicide rather than face other devastating raids. I could readily believe these reports knowing the awesome sight of an 8th Air Force bombing mission. It had to be hell trying to survive under those falling bombs.

It was 4 February and the target was naturally Frankfurt. It was really cold up there—a minus 47° F. The run into the target was uneventful. The flak heavier than on the previous mission and we received a

*Kiley had great faith in the Flying Fortress—it was a rugged and dependable bomber.*



hit on the #2 engine. Lt. Carlson was at the controls of #524 that day. I liked the man a lot even though this was the first time I had flown with him. He was in control all the way and gave the crew a feeling of confidence in his ability. We came off the target and started home with #2 feathered. The plane could make it home on three engines as long as we could stay with the formation. Too few strays made it back to England on their own.

Apparently, the lead navigator made a slight error in our homeward course. We flew right up the Ruhr Valley. The flak flew into the sky by the ton. Mile after mile, the ground gunners tried their luck but we stuck to our course and cursed the lead navigator all the way. Good Lord, this was only my second mission and I didn't need to be part of a shooting gallery. It was a great feeling to get back to base, but the news I found waiting for me wasn't welcome.

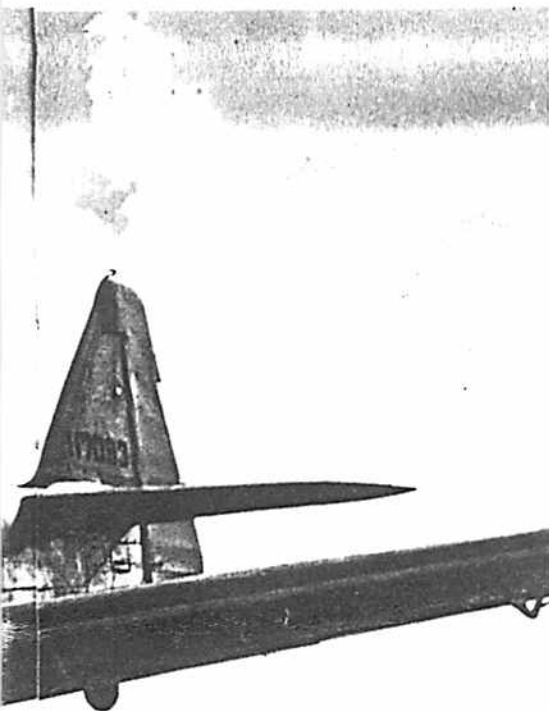
Before this mission I wasn't scheduled for the one flown to Wilmshaven. Instead, I had attended ground school and on my way over to the Red Cross, decided to stop off at the chapel to seek a little help from the man upstairs for my next mission. I met one of my buddies

on the way and he informed me that "Little Moe" was flying a crew to Scotland for flak leave and needed a Radio Operator. They had flown their thirteenth mission yesterday and had received a good roughing up from the *Luftwaffe*. It was customary to be given ten days' leave after the thirteenth for rest and recuperation. I must admit my prayers at the chapel were not to survive my next bombing mission, but to not fly with "Little Moe." I had nothing against the man except a fear of flying with him. I had no confidence in him even though he could certainly handle the big ones. I did not want to be his Radio Operator on this trip to Scotland and so I prayed.

I left the chapel and cycled over to the Red Cross. I no sooner had arrived, when someone told me Operations was looking for me. The dread moment had come and I had no choice but to go to operations and hope for the best. When I reported, I found that "Little Moe" had already taken off. A radioman who had completed his twenty-five missions and had received a field commission had gone in my place. The bad news was they had engine trouble in Scotland and had taken off before the proper repairs had been made. The plane crashed on

takeoff and the four-man crew was killed. War is no place for impatience and they might be alive today if "Little Moe" had given the mechanics time to do the job right. The tragedy sent me back to the chapel to give thanks to God for sparing me the journey to Scotland and death. I felt quite remorseful for the man who had volunteered only to die in my place.

Five February found me on my way to bomb a Nazi airfield at Chateaudun, France. It was about seventy miles southwest of Paris. I was with Lt. Clark in ship #518. We approached the target and began our bomb run. It seemed awfully quiet and then it dawned on me that there was no flak. We were bombing from 17,000 feet and must have made a beautiful target in the sky. We crossed the airfield but no bombs were dropped. The formation turned and swung around for another run on the target. We had no idea why the lead bombardier didn't drop his bombs. The formation was to drop their bombs when he did. As we approached the target again, all hell broke loose. The flak guns were pouring it on. There were explosions all around the formation and you could hear the pieces of shrapnel banging off the plane's surface. We bombed



Gunner training was often carried out with Beech AT-11 Kansans or North American AT-6 Texans.

this time with good results and headed for home. Sgt. Powers, a radio operator, was our only squadron casualty on the mission. His flak wounds would keep him out of the air for a short time. We never received an explanation for the screw-up so the lead bombardier was blamed.

On 8 February, the 306th went to Frankfurt again. I stayed home and attended ground school. All ships came back safely.

The following day, we were briefed for a trip to Leipzig, Germany, about ninety miles southwest of Berlin. The target was an aircraft factory 3½ miles northwest of the town. This was a long trip of 1,500 miles and would be about eight hours flying time. We were recalled to base.

At last, 11 February. I was scheduled to fly my first mission with my original crew in *Choo-Z-Suzy*. The target was Frankfurt again. It was an eventful day with heavy cloud cover over the target. The clouds saved Frankfurt from another pounding. As the B-17s flew on, a break in

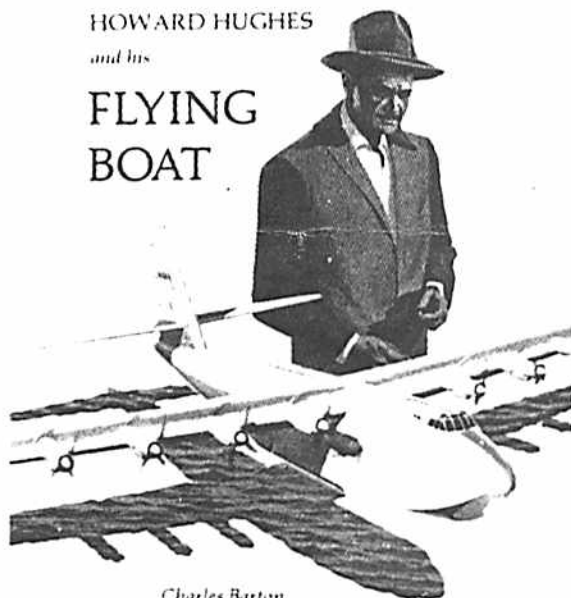
the clouds revealed a target of opportunity. It was later identified as Saarbrücken, Germany. There was a deadly hail from the ground. The flak gunners were doing their job and we could hear the metal punching holes in the plane. Fortress #388 was hit and disappeared into the mist below. Lt. De Betta was the pilot and a friend, Jim Coleman, was with him. I never heard about either of them again. They said it was our squadron's first loss in twenty-two missions. It was on this mission that our ball-turret gunner, Ed Craemer, had oxygen problems. We couldn't get him on the intercom, so I cranked up the ball turret and opened the door. He was unconscious when we pulled him out and revived him. His oxygen system had fouled up. The squadron's only other casualty was Stg. Parks, who gained the distinction of being the third Radio Operator to be wounded by flak in a ten-day period.

It was 20 February when we took off for Leipzig, Germany, with Lt. Sutton at the control of #008. We hit the aircraft factory with good results. Lt. Richards' ship was knocked out of formation as we came off the target. He dropped back and that was all the Bf-109s needed. A lone

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Fortress draws enemy fighters fast. Eight of them came running to get in on the kill. I watched helplessly as they attacked again and again. The Fort kept flying and the crew put up the greatest fight I have ever witnessed in combat. They shot down five of the enemy planes before they went down in flames. A friend, Jim Crouse, was in the top turret and I'm sure he never got out alive.

On the 21st, the group went to Lippstadt and the following day hit Bernberg. Our planes sustained a lot of battle damage. Lt. Toombe's plane blew up under fighter attack with no survivors and Lt. Koch's crew suffered several wounded. I was not scheduled for either of these missions, thank God!

Twenty-four February turned out to be a day I have never forgotten. Our assignment was the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt, Germany. We would be flying low group, low squadron and our ship would be in the "hole behind the hole" which was not a very enviable position. This meant the first six planes would form two Vs and we would fill in the spot in the rear of the squadron. Lt. Garrett was leading the squadron. Take-off was routine and the group formed up and headed for another suspenseful trip into *Luftwaffe* territory. I could feel my body go tense when the Bombardier called, "Fighters at one o'clock high." I could not see them from my gun position in the radio compartment as my gun faced the rear of the ship. The enemy movements were called over the intercom: Fighters were preparing their frontal attack on the formation and in they came with machine guns and cannon fire slamming into the Forts. They came through the bomber for-

mation and I picked up a Bf-109 to my left and started shooting. I saw my tracers disappear into the side of the 109, but it kept going and pulled up out of range of the guns. I was so engrossed in the fight I didn't realize that Lt. Sutton was kicking the Fort all over the sky trying to make us as poor a target as possible. The *Luftwaffe* apparently didn't like our reception and went to attack a B-24 formation behind us. Lt. Garrett had dropped out of formation with #2 engine on fire. Bill Carroll who occupied the bunk under me was a waist gunner on that ship. He and Al Diltz, the radioman, were friends of mine. The B-17 dropped to the rear and the crew started bailing out. I was positive Bill was the second man out. His parachute opened and he floated out of my sight.

But we were having our problems too. A 20mm cannon shell had cut the oxygen line back by the waist gunner and the rear of the plane from my position back was without oxygen. Thankfully, the pilot and the others up front were on a separate system, and the ball turret gunner had his own supply. We were about an hour and a half from our target when myself, the two waist gunners and the tail gunner began to feel sleepy and groggy. I tried to remain cool and calm so I laid down on the floor of the radio room. My wife and I feel that this was our special miracle because two weeks later, when I received a letter from her, she told me how frightened she was about me one night and got out of bed and onto her knees to pray. She asked the Blessed Virgin to wrap her mantle of blue around my plane. We found out later, it was

the exact time I was experiencing being without oxygen. I can still remember looking out through the gun port and seeing a beautiful blue haze surrounding the plane. It was so impressive that I got up off the floor to look out. At this moment, a piece of flak came up through the camera well and through the floor where I had been lying. Some people might call this fate but I call it a miracle. I brought the piece of flak home with me and have kept it to this day.

My tail gunner stayed at his position but the two waist gunners were obviously getting punchy and ready to bail out. I waved and yelled at them to hold their positions while oxygen bottles were brought up from the front.

We had started out low group, low squadron, hole behind the hole, and suddenly, we were flying—high squadron off the right wing of the leader because the rest of our squadron was gone. We had lost the other six ships, and were the only ones to return from our squadron. I looked back and the Germans were working over the B-24 Group. They too were taking some losses as gaps in the bomber formation showed.

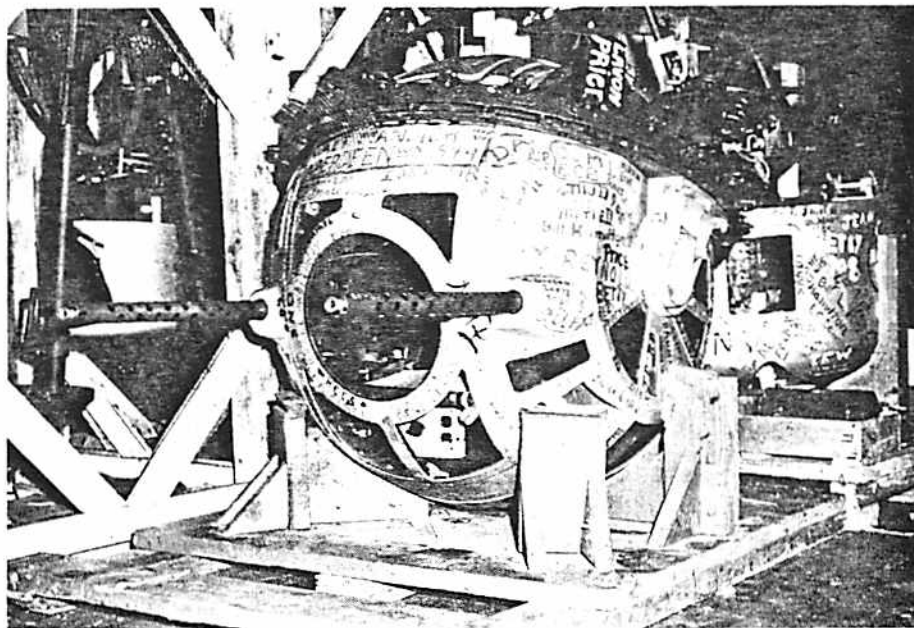
We went on and bombed the target and headed back to England. I didn't realize the loss we suffered until my tail gunner and I walked into our almost empty barrack that night. The toll for the day was eighty-eight bombers lost. In humans, it meant 880 men dead, wounded or prisoners-of-war. Bill Carroll had often talked of his folks back in the Bronx so I wrote his mother a letter to try to assure her of his safety. She was so grateful she had a reporter write about the letter for the *Journal-American* newspaper after getting word that he was safe and a prisoner. My fiance sent me a copy of the article which read: To "Red," a soldier now overseas, go the eternal thanks today of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Carroll of Dyckman St., New York City.

On 13 March they received a War Department telegram reporting their son, Staff Sgt. William J. Carroll, Jr., assistant engineer, on a Flying Fortress, was missing in action.

Before that, they had received a letter, signed just "Red": "I don't imagine Bill ever told you about me, but I'm one of his buddies over here. I slept in the bunk next to him, so we got to be good pals.

"Saw him bail out.

"I thought I'd drop you this line



The ball turret gunner was virtually cut off from the rest of the crew.

to let you know that Bill is safe. I'm positive of that as I was there that day, and saw him bail out. It will be a few months before you hear from him but I know how mothers are. They always worry. That's why I'm writing this, so you know he's alive and OK."

"Red" was right, the Red Cross has reported Carroll as a German prisoner of war, seen bailing out by the keen eyes of "Red," in another Fortress.

Al Diltz, another buddy of mine, was not quite so lucky. He was shot by a German farmer as he came down in his chute. His leg became infected and the German doctors amputated it. This was my sixth mission and one I shall never forget.

The next day, the Group went to Stuttgart and Regensburg. They lost five more ships. My squadron was off operations due to the previous day's losses. Our plane went into the repair shop for a wing change and new gas tanks. It wouldn't be ready for a week.

On 28 February, we flew an easy one in #521 to the Calais area. We bombed installations there and all ships returned safely to base.

On 2 March, we took off for Frankfurt. Lt. Sutton turned back over the English Channel when a fire started in #3 engine and #2 overheated. The fire was extinguished and we returned #527 to base.

The morning of 3 March, there was plenty of excitement in the briefing room. The string stretched right to the big one—BERLIN. We knew this would be one hell of a fight. If we succeed in a successful bombing of Berlin, German morale would suffer immensely and the *Luftwaffe* could be the object of severe criticism. The planes were recalled over Denmark due to the impossible weather. It was so cold the contrails given off by the planes' engines cut visibility and caused numerous crashes when making the turn around back to base. 4 March proved to be the same with one exception. Some planes either ignored the recall or did not receive it and went on to be the first of the 8th Air Force to bomb Berlin.

Six March, and off to Berlin again. Lt. Sutton flew #539 with about 1,000 other Forts and Liberators. We arrived over Germany and there in front of us was what must be the entire *Luftwaffe*. Goering's pets, with the noses of the planes painted yellow, were going to make us pay this time. We could see their guns belching flame into an ominous sky. They came in at us from above

attacking the left front of our Fortress. The top turret gunner fired first and hit one enemy aircraft at 100 yards. The pilot veered off and was hit by the right waist gunner—burst into flames and broke up. Another fighter came from below and our ball turret gunner said he could see his tracers going into the fuselage. Then the bombardier yelled, "Here they come!", and a moment later started cheering. Our Mustang fighters had arrived and dropped down between the enemy and the bombers to stop them dead. Boy, what a welcome sight! It was great

to have those fighter pilots out there giving us a new hope to make this big one and get back alive. We fought off a few who got to us and made it through intense flak to drop our bombs in the center of Berlin. It was frightening business for a while, slugging it out in a vast sky. The mission was tough but we made it home with flak holes in the #4 gas tank.

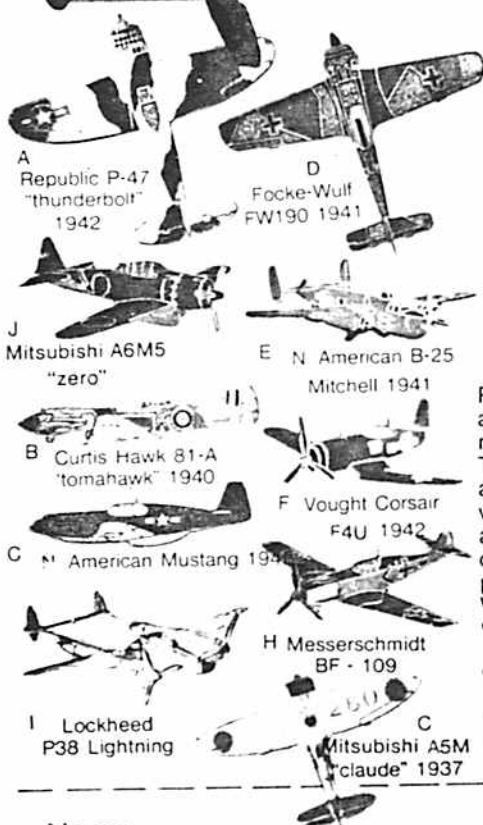
The 9 March raid on Berlin was my tenth mission. We didn't see too many fighters but the flak was very

(Continued on page 76)

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# AIRLINES

(Continued from page 11)

in the corridors of the War Department, the news media, and in Congress the first class of WWII Sergeant Pilots of the Army Air Corps began their flight training. The graduates of this class went on to fame as members of the 82nd Fighter Group, flying their P-38s first around the Los Angeles area then later in Africa, Corsica, and Italy (*Air Classics* feature story "WWII Sergeant Pilots and their Lightnings," June 1979 through January 1980).

The ninety-eight graduates of that class were but the first of over 2,400 enlisted men who were trained as Sergeant Pilots by the Army in 1942. Not to be confused with Liaison or Glider Pilots, these men trained on and flew the regular line aircraft of the AAF from P-40s, P-39s, P-47s, and C-47s, C-46s, through B-25s, B-26s, B-17s, B-24s and B-29s. Many went into combat in Africa, New Guinea and over the Hump while still serving as Sergeant. While most were eventually made Flight Officers or commissioned, at least nine are known to have been killed in action while still serving as Sergeant Pilots.

Research has disclosed that these men were only part of a proud heritage of enlisted pilots within the Army. A heritage which stretches all the way back to 1912 when Corporal Vernon L. Burge became the first enlisted man of the U.S. Army to be trained and certified as a Military Aviator. Following Burge a small steady stream of men were trained or flew as enlisted pilots in the emerging Air Force before the program came to a halt in the mid-1930s. A total of 153 men have been so identified including such notable aviation pioneers as William C. Ocker and Alva L. Harvey. Also identified have been a number of men who were trained as pilots by the RCAF and then transferred to the USAAF as Sergeant Pilots after the USA entered WWII.

The first reunion ever of this rather obscure band of men is scheduled for the coming September in Colorado Springs. Over 200 of the former enlisted pilots, including several who flew as enlisted pilots during the 1920s and 1930s, have already indicated that they will join in this celebration. We would appreciate the insertion of the following announcement in the forthcoming issue of

*Air Classics* in hopes of locating other members of our fraternity.

"ENLISTED PILOTS OF THE ARMY AIR CORPS AND AAF. Sergeant Pilot Training Classes 42-C through 42-J, and classes prior to 1933 will hold a reunion to celebrate a 40th Anniversary, September 9 through 12, 1983 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Contact J. H. MacWilliam, P.O. Box 764, Columbus, NC 28722. Telephone (704) 894-3200."

Thank you,  
J. H. MacWilliam  
Class 42-G  
Williams Field, Arizona

## missions over EUROPE

(Continued from page 21)

intense. Black puffs of exploding shells were everywhere. Our squadron returned to base safely but one ship from the Group landed in Sweden where the crew was interned.

For the next week, we were briefed every morning but all were scrubbed. On the 18th, we flew in #431 to Iechfeld near Munich. An Me-410 came up to the rear of the formation apparently to fire some rockets. We greeted it with a few bursts of machine gun fire and it veered off and disappeared. We dropped our cargo of fragmentation bombs on an airfield and headed back to England and the completion of my eleventh mission.

Nineteen and 20 March were spent flying practice gunnery missions. It was the 28th before I flew my twelfth mission. Our target was an airfield near Dijon, France. It was an easy flight on ship #539 with Lt. Frazer at the controls. There was no flak or fighter opposition and all planes returned to base safely.

However, the next morning we were on our way to Brunswick, Germany. The trip into the target was uneventful and we dropped our load on some factories. As we came off the target and turned for home, all hell broke loose. Two dozen or more FW-190s attacked head on and came right through our group of Forts. Lt. Hardin went down and two ships from the 369th joined him. They were flown by Lts. Schuering and Haywood. I was so busy on the machine gun that I didn't know if any chutes were seen. We took some cannon hits

on our right wing. There was a gaping hole in the leading edge where one entered and exploded inside the wing. No. 505 was a good plane and Lt. Welter a darn good pilot who kept his head. We fought off the FWs and made England safely. It was my thirteenth mission.

After a ten-day leave for rest and recuperation, we flew many practice missions over England to sharpen us up. It was 25 April when we flew our next mission. Our target was an airfield just east of Nancy, France. Cloud cover was very heavy and we could not see the field. We brought our bombs back to base. My fourteenth mission. B-17 #963.

On 26 April, we went to Brunswick again. This time a Pathfinder marked the drop and we bombed through the clouds. All crews returned safely. Lt. Koch was the pilot in ship #146.

The next day, we had a short one over the Pas-de-Calais area in France. This was all part of the "softening up" for the invasion to come.

On 29 April our objective was Berlin once again. The flak was thicker than ever and we took a number of hits on the bomb run. It was very rough but we dropped our bombs on the city and made it back to England.

We went back to Berlin again on 7 and 8 May. It was about the same each time we went. No sign of German fighters only our own escort. Flak was our worst enemy because it ripped and tore the planes and we could not take evasive action once we had started our bomb run. We took what ever they fired at us until "bombs away" when the pilot took control again and literally bounced the Fortress all over the sky.

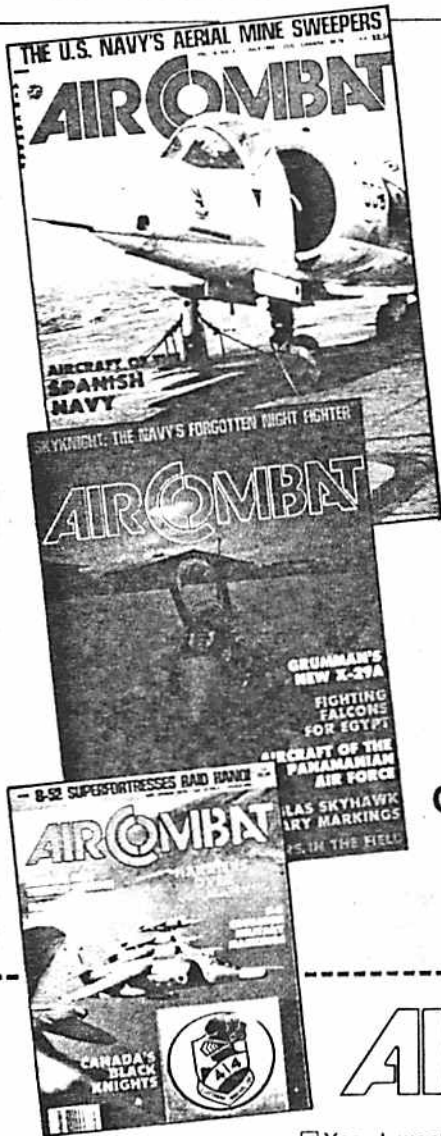
I had flown the last four missions with my regular crew in ship #055. My pilot, Lt. Sutton, was nearing the end of his tour. He had only a couple left to fly. I had flown some of mine with other crews who needed a Radio Operator, but I was happy to have completed nineteen missions and still be alive.

On 11 May, Lt. Sutton flew us to Saarbrucken, Germany. It was a rough one. The flak was accurate and we were thankful when the bombs dropped so we could get out of there (ship #444).

On 20 May, Lt. Sutton finished his last mission. It was my twenty-first and the target was an airfield on the outskirts of Paris, France. All planes returned to base (ship #397).

Now I would have to finish my

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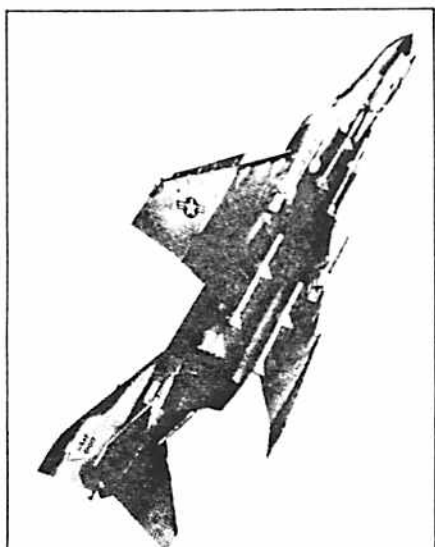
tour with any crew that needed a Radio Operator. Consequently, my twenty-second mission was flown with Lt. J. J. O'Brien in ship #505. It was 3 June, and our target was 105mm gun emplacements in the coastal area of France. Nice mission — no fighters, no flak.

Six June, the invasion was on. We were kept on constant alert. Not having a regular pilot and crew anymore, I was left behind when our group took off to bomb ahead of the invading troops.

Eight June, I took off with Lt. Nickelhoff in ship #683. Our target was an airfield at Rennes, France. We encountered light flak but no fighter opposition. It was almost as if the Germans were giving up. It was an easy number twenty-three for me.

Fifteen June, we bombed an airfield at Etempes/Mondesir in France. It was an easy one with light, inaccurate flak. My pilot was Lt. Neddo in ship #616.

Eighteen June, my squadron lost Lt. Latham and crew which really depressed me. More good friends gone. They went down over Hamburg, Germany.



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I started to feel sick and weary of war and was terribly homesick for the States and my girl. I decided to take a chance and volunteer for another tour of duty (thirty-five missions) in exchange for thirty days home plus travel time. Our tour of duty had already been raised and even though I had been given credit for three extra missions, I still had four or five more to go to finish my tour. My buddies thought I was mad with only a few more missions left and told me I'd surely get killed if I had to do thirty-five more. But at this point, I didn't care and took the gamble.

Twenty-two June, I was assigned to Lt. Fossum's crew for a mission to the Marshalling yards in Ghent, Belgium. My last mission was a milk run. I had a load of "chaff" on board and never stopped throwing it out as we started the bomb run. The purpose of "chaff" was to mess up the German radar and flak guns. I don't know how much it helped but not a single shot was fired at us.

On 24 June, I was awarded the D.F.C. to go with my Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. I also received my orders to report to the 12th R.C.D. which was near Liverpool. I boarded the *George Washington* on 30 June and sailed for Belfast, Ireland. On 2 July, we left Belfast for New York. I was told the *George Washington* was formerly the old *Deutschland* which we had captured from the Germans in World War One. We dropped out of the convoy three times due to engine trouble. It's a frightening feeling sitting dead in the ocean hoping no German submarines were in the area.

I was married in Yonkers, New York, on 19 July. I called Mr. and

Mrs. Carroll, my buddy's parents, and told them whatever I could about their son who had written to them from a German prison of war camp. I was delighted when they came all the way up from Dyckman Street to attend my wedding. When I reported back, I was sent to Atlantic City for rest and recuperation while awaiting reassignment. My wife and I were put up at the Ambassador Hotel on the boardwalk and had a most enjoyable vacation on the Army. I never told my wife that I had volunteered for another tour of duty because I didn't want to spoil our honeymoon.

One day I was called to a special meeting in the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel. The 8th Air Force announced that all non-commissioned officers would not be sent back to England. My orders had been cancelled. I'll never forget that day as long as I live. My wife told me, she could hear the yelling and screaming all the way up to the eleventh floor. I discovered that life at its best is a chance, and sometimes it pays off when you take a gamble. Some of my buddies, who thought I was so foolish, were killed making those remaining missions.

In September, I was sent to Central Instructor's School at Laredo, Texas, and upon graduating was assigned as a Gunnery Instructor at Gulfport, Mississippi, for the duration of the war.

# The Unknown Ace

(Continued from page 37)

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ers, fired a short burst at close range and saw it explode in flames. The next enemy fighter in the line tried to maneuver away but Johnson, firing a perfect deflection shot caught it square in the fuselage and it began to burn. Only a little over a minute was needed to shoot down the two Japanese fighters and they hit the water a mere 200 feet apart. Reforming the squadron, Johnson then spotted a formation of enemy bombers and prepared to attack. During the fight Johnson got a long burst into a twin engine Helen bomber. It went down in flames and crashed into the ocean. Three enemy planes downed that day were to raise Johnson's total to twenty victories.

On 7 April 1945, the P-38 Light-