

the street urchins at all. It was not our day believe me.

When we asked him for girls, he didn't understand and when it finally sank in what we were asking for he got a shocked look on his face and shook his head emphatically. He finally agreed to take us to a place and we wandered back into the hinterlands until the kid knocked on a door of what looked like a nice respectable place. Nobody answered. After a moment, the kid turned around and walked away without looking back or saying anything. He left us at the mercy of the night.

We didn't know where we were nor could we have found our way back to the city lights, it was so dark. We kept banging on the door. What else could we do?

Finally a man came to the door and told us the girls were gone for the night and would we please come back tomorrow. We told him our problem and asked if we could just rent the room. It was OK with him. He took us to a spotlessly clean room on the second floor of the house. It even had a little patio with grapevines and citrus trees in tubs. It was a first class whore house but we still jammed a chair under the doorknob when we went to sleep. The man tapped on the door and wanted to know what time we wanted the girls in the morning. We told him nine o'clock in the morning. We left the place by seven o'clock and the road for Rome.

The rest of the trip was very interesting and exciting but it's just like any other travellog. We travelled up past Monte Cassino, and the pontine marshes and around Anzio by thumb, then all over magnificent Rome on foot.

I wonder what that little boy and the guy at the brothel thought we were.

Fred Roessler,  
Co-Pilot crew #76 827th Sq

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Mayor's Office  
Johnstown, NY  
Mr Bud Markel, Editor  
The Torretta Flyer

Dear Bud:

Ralph Hallenbeck's chronicle of his horror experience on the May 29, 1944 mission over Weiner Neustadt brought back a flood of memories. It just happened on that mission I was flying as the navigator in the deputy position, and when Hallenbeck's plane was shot down, we had to take over. One of the very vivid memories I have is that of his plane slowly spiraling downward like a leaf falling in a gentle breeze. I remember wondering if the crew could overcome the centrifugal force to be able to exit the plane.

As I recall we received some damage also. I personally had my head in the bubble in the nose of the plane directing the pilot toward the target until the bombardier could get it in his sights, I had just turned away toward the desk to make some notes in my

log, when a piece of flak came through the bubble where my head had been only a second or so before.

We were unable to close the bomb bay doors, and we had a ruptured gas line. Our flight engineer, without parachute and standing on a narrow catwalk with seventeen thousand feet of free space below him, taped up the gas line and enabled us to get back. I believe at my suggestion he got a much deserved medal, I am not sure which, but I believe it was a silver star. I don't recall now that I viewed this mission as out of the ordinary, you tended to become fatalistic and accepted the risk as a matter of course. If you didn't you ended up back in the States with a medical leave of some sort.

Since, as I recall, as a squadron navigator at the time I wasn't assigned to a special crew I can't remember the name of the aircrew men who I flew with on this particular mission, though I often flew with the squadron commanders which if my memory serves me right were Jerry Dufour and George Ponty. Also and most regrettably, with few exceptions I have been almost completely out of touch with the men who were so close for the year and a half I spent in Europe, so memories tend to become distorted and events become somewhat apocryphal.

At any rate the article itself was well worth the membership in the association. I am glad someone has the time and dedication to keep these times and memories alive.

Donald F Murphy, (824 Sq) Mayor  
Johnstown, NY

Editors Note: Major Murphy received a decoration for his action on the mission of 29 May, 1944 as deputy lead navigator:

From General Orders #2591 HQ 15th AF 21 April, 1945

DONALD F MURPHY 0795288, Major, Headquarters 484th Bomb Group for gallantry in action as a navigator for a B-24 type aircraft. On 29 May, 1944, Major Murphy participated as deputy lead navigator of a group formation on a bombing mission against a vital enemy aircraft factory in Austria. Approaching the target, his formation encountered intense, heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire which severely damaged his aircraft destroying vital navigational instruments.

Assuming lead of the group formation when the lead aircraft was destroyed by enemy fire, displaying outstanding courage and determination, Major Murphy guided his pilot through the heavy enemy fire for a highly successful bombing run. Under his superior leadership, despite the lack of instruments and the crippled condition of his aircraft, the bombs from the entire formation were well concentrated in the target area, inflicting grave damage on vital enemy installations and supplies. Leaving the objective, through outstanding professional skill and determination, Major Murphy brought back the entire formation through to base without further loss.

By his conspicuous gallantry, leadership and devotion to duty as evidenced throughout 34 successful missions against the enemy, Major Murphy has reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Residence at appointment. Buffalo, NY.