

stratus overcast was effected on schedule. But looking out, trouble could be seen out toward the Adriatic Sea as we started for the Wing rendezvous area. The high cloud build up at cruise altitude and the low cirrus below predicted a rough journey.

The lead crew had been to Bucharest twice before under extremely poor weather conditions so this mission did not pose any great problem.

Lt Veiluva, the Lead Pilot and Capt. Goree the Group Commander for the mission traded off on the controls at frequent intervals because instrument flying was more tiring in this haze which eliminated the horizon and a poor view of the surface. There was one mile visibility that allowed the Wing men to hold position. Lt De Witt did a superb job of navigating us through the flak areas enroute. The overcast below was still solid.

As we reached the Danube, the undercast began to climb to 20,000 feet. The lead group of the Wing was too low to make it, so they turned the lead over to us and left for an alternate target and home base. About the same time the radio was jammed by other groups advising they were abandoning the mission too. Someone in our group called up and asked if we were going to give it up. When they received our negative reply, he answered, "I don't go for this hero ____."

We went on feeling very lonely. Like the break of a cloudless day, the weather cleared about the middle of Rumania. We were to have a clear shot at the target, the reward for hanging on a little bit longer.

A few fighters began to appear but they weren't aggressive. After their first pass we assured them that we could defend our formation as we didn't have the aid of friendly fighter cover. The target was coming into range and we still had 30 miles to go.

Rotten luck hit the lead ship. The target was almost discernible, 12 minutes to and the nose section oxygen supply failed. Sgt Puss rushed two large walk around bottles up through the bomb bays to the nose section. This gave new life for Lt. Iconis and Lt. De Witt. It was the zero hour on the bomb run, when Lt Iconis discovered that the pilot's direction indicator wasn't working. He gave Lt. Veiluva, who was flying the ship at the time several oaths over the intercom that sounded like, "Left, God Dammit, Left." What looked like dark clouds ahead turned out to be barrage flak.

The sweetest words ever spoken, "Bombs Away" followed the last course correction from little Ike. Then we started a gentle roll or the maneuver called, "Let's get the Hell out of here." The flak was near now and the familiar sound of hail was in our ears as the spent shrapnel bounced off the skin of our plane, but it seemed we were successfully evading the worst part by our horseshoe turn (Or was it luck?)

Sgt. Kurawe called in from the tail to advise us to slow down for cripples. Sgt Zimmerman began reporting that the bombs were knocking hell out of the yards. He could see our first pattern, then the second which filled in all spare openings. With these words of encouragement, the dark trip home seemed unimportant for a minute. There was a solid feeling that comes from being under attack with the target well hit and the cripples all successfully covered.

As we approached the Danube, thunderheads began to take shape once again. This time the problem was in reverse. The group had to get down through the weather and back to the base. McQuillan dropped behind the second section. I could see Koska take B flight out wide as soon as he was called. The flight loosened up and about one hour later we were over the Adriatic in the clear. Everyone was accounted for and it looked as though the work was done for the day.

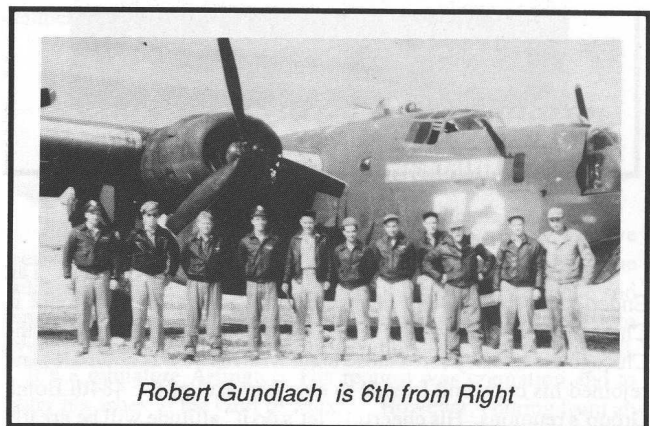
When we checked the ditching channel on the radio the Mayday calls came in all too clearly, and the long count for the radio fix and then another Mayday call. We contacted Big Fence and they gave us a heading from our position in the middle of the Adriatic to a point due south and 30 minutes away. We told them we could stretch our fuel and take up the search, we turned 180 degrees and started for the indicated spot. We had a hunch it could be no more than an oil slick on the smooth rolling sea. Within one minute of our ETA we spotted something. As we circled low we could make out two rafts with ten men. That was the most successful hunt we had ever been on. A spitfire came out to relieve us and mark the location before heading back to lead the rescue launch. One hour after first spotting the rafts, the launch pulled along side and took the men aboard. With our fuel low, we headed straight for the field to end a most successful day for all of us.

Jacob L Grim, 824th Squadron

Jacob Grim died on a hunting trip for deer in 1992. He was an avid hunter and outdoors man. His sudden death shocked the whole family, but he did not suffer and went on his Final Mission doing what he wanted to do. He attended many reunions and was looking forward to the 1993 reunion in Harrisburg because it was so close to York where he lived. He is survived by his wife Sydney.

Robert Charles Gundlach, 827 Squadron

Born May 20, 1914 ,Chicago, Passed away April 14, 1993, Las Vegas, Nevada



Robert Gundlach is 6th from Right

Robert "Bob" Charles Gundlach retired to Las Vegas in 1980 after 37 years at Illinois Tool Works as a machinist. He enjoyed bowling 5 leagues a week and won a Gold Medal in the Senior Olympics in bowling in Singles and a Gold medal in doubles.

The Torretta Flyer was like a breath of fresh air to him. He would look forward to each issue and not miss a word, and kept every copy. The people he really held close to him were his wartime buddies.

He was married for 51 years and had one son and two grandsons. His plane was on the cover of the Fall-Winter 1992 issue of the Torretta Flyer.