
A Typical Mission!

By T/Sgt. Robert J. Schaefer

It was a cold, damp morning in February 1945 when Boone's Crew was awakened by Lieutenant John Roe, Navigator at 0500. The crew was scheduled to fly a mission that day.

After the usual complaints and groanings the crew moved through the Italian mud to the mess hall for early morning special breakfast for crews that were on call. We then assembled in the flight room for briefing of today's target. After preliminary comments by the Commanding Officer, he then drew the curtain aside on the large wall map which indicated that today's target would be Linz, Austria. Reaction from the crews was a large moan. This was because only Vienna, Austria had a greater concentration of over five hundred anti-aircraft guns than Linz, Austria. We were in for a rough ride. The weather was forecast for clear skies which increased the possibility of enemy fighters in the area.

We then picked up our heated flight suits, insulated boots, parachutes, oxygen masks, 45 caliber pistols, survival kits, etc. and we were off to the flight line. Some of us got lucky and hitched a ride on a fuel truck rather than the usual G.I. trucks. The fuel truck was a much smoother ride and it dropped us off on the hard stand reserved for number 35 B24G airplane called Stud Horse. This was the oldest plane on the base and had survived the most missions. We felt our luck was holding firm.

The flight plan called for starting engines at 0730. So just before the time most of the crew took a last minute breather to relieve themselves in the grass adjacent to the hard stand, as this was to be an eight hour mission.

The crew chief responsible for Stud Horse gave us a last minute thumbs up OK. Everything was in order. The gas tanks were topped off and the plane was as ready as it was ever going to be.

This was to be Boone's crew thirteenth mission. By this time our flight desk crew of Pilot Boone, Co-Pilot Sumerlin, Engineer Schaefer and Radio Operator Neutzlinger had become a little cocky or over confident feeling that we were experienced flyers. As a consequence we rushed through the prescribed pre-flight check lists.

While taxiing for take off Navigator Roe was doing his usual thing in the bomb bays. He was throwing-up green bile. This was a ritual with him but once we were in the air his stomach returned to normal. This particular day we were carrying four one thousand pound bombs which were going to be dropped on Linz Marshaling Yards.

Just before we were lined up for take off Top Turret Gunner Kelly switched off the put-put (the auxiliary ground electrical generator) Thank heavens as it smelled like hell while in operation. We then received the go ahead signal from the tower. Pilot Boone pushed the four engine throttles forward and we began our take off run.

Seconds later the heavy loaded plane was gaining speed for "Lift off." Pilot Boone pulled back the column for raising the nose but nothing happened. "The controls are locked." Sure enough! We had forgotten to release the safety strap which locked the controls while the plane was on the ground. To make matters worse, in our haste to rush through the pre-flight check we also did not set in 20 degrees of flap to increase lifting power of the Davis wing foil. Luckily being young and still having good reaction time we were able to unhook the control strap at about the time we were approaching ninety miles per hour and three quarters of the way down the runway. We were also able to crank in some flap. From the ground it looked like a normal take off. We on the flight deck knew better.

From then on, for awhile, routines took over. We gained altitude and assumed our assigned position as tail end Charley in D flight. After hours of circling we gained the necessary 20,000 plus feet of altitude and proceeded to the target. This was a large raid of over one hundred planes.

As we neared the target Radio operator Neutzlinger moved from the flight deck as he was assigned to fly a .50 caliber waist gun as was the Engineer. Shortly thereafter I began my journey through the bomb bay to the waist. To this day I don't know what prompted me to take a large oxygen bottle rather than the smaller oxygen bottle which I usually used.

Half way through the bomb bay my parachute harness got caught on the cat walk. Try as I might to wiggle loose I couldn't. I was really stuck. Just about then the bombardier opened the bomb bay doors. Immediately the wind caught my oxygen bottle, which was now flying loosely in the air but fortunately didn't rip off my oxygen mask. The temperature also seemed to drop about fifty degrees.

While I was stuck in the bomb bay it was time for "bombs away". I saw three of the bombs released and seconds later they exploded in the marshaling yards. But the fourth bomb got hung up and was not released. Luckily I was close enough to give it one swift kick and it finally left the plane. At the same time that extra effort seemed to loosen my stuck parachute harness and I was finally able to move back to the waist. The only trouble was that I was completely exhausted. I laid on the floor just able to hook up into the planes main oxygen supply as my walk around bottle was now completely empty of the life giving oxygen.

As I laid there on the floor Tail Gunner Porter was motioning frantically to me to plug in the inter phone headset in my helmet. Doing so I heard Pilot Boone requesting me to return to the flight deck immediately. I said "give me a break, I'm pooped, I just spent an eternity stuck in the bomb bay". He said with emphasis, "Get

