

I'm sorry I couldn't write home from Hungary or Romania. it isn't like living in the states you know, especially with the Russians in control. They are horrible. I can't figure out why we were allied with them. Personally I hate them.

The only reason Rold couldn't write that we were OK was because of security reasons, but they knew we were all right. they locked up our Cassa and everything was just as we left it. He tried his best to tell you we were safe, that is he wrote as much as would get by the censors.

Since the War Department can send you all the dope, guess I can go them one better and make a story out of it since you like stories.

We went down to briefing pretty early as usual and walked into the room and everybody almost passed out with "Ohs & Ahs and I'm sick Doc" like they always do when Vienna is at the tail end of the long lines on the map. I guess it doesn't make any difference how crooked the lines are, I'll be damned if they don't all seem to end up at the same place when I'm flying, Vienna. It was the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery just west of the city limits. If there is one I hate it's that "Heinie" who's operating that 88mm anti aircraft gun just outside the No#2 storage tank. He must have seen my name on the board 'cause he sure was laying for me. We were supposed to fly deputy lead of the second attack unit, but Yanney cracks up on the runway and only Gaskill and I get off behind him when they shoot up the red flares and stop the works. That puts me leading the second attack unit with only Gaskill on my wing because the rest didn't get off 'till later and they had to fly with 461st. There wasn't any use flying out there by ourselves, so we move up with the first attack unit, but it doesn't make any difference to "Pete" down there on those 88s, he just had me figured out.

We started out on the bomb run and No#3 engine was losing oil pressure and down to 70 pounds, but there was a heavy cloud cover and I didn't think that "Pete" could see us, but I'll be damned he sure was on the job. I can still see him working those little wheels down there and pointing his guns right at my No #2 engine. He hits us with his first burst, and the 88mm shell went right through and out the other side. He knew I was nicely hit and losing No#3 too. He thought he would play around with me. First he lays one under the nose and one piece hits Pell on the seat, and another jams the controls. Another shell knocks out the inverters, he just peppers us, and knocks holes in the every gas tank, cuts Broch's (T/G) electric heated suit cord, knocks out the walk around oxygen bottles in the back, finishing up by cutting the cross feed fuel line, and flattening the left tire. He must have figured out we were done for, but old Metzler (one of my gunners) comes to the fore and saves old "200".

He climbs out into the open bomb bay without a chute and no oxygen and hangs on to the broken gas lines until he begins to pass out. Just as he passes out and starts to fall face first and down a mere 25,000 feet, Earl grabs him and pulls him into the waist. He gives him emergency oxygen. Metzler jumps up after coming to and climbs back out and grabs hold of the lines again because he knows we'd never make it back without gas. It was coming out of the tank like a sieve, and we dropping like a rock. We got low enough so that we could breathe without oxygen. Metzler proceeds to tie up the fuel lines. By then we had lost so much gas she wouldn't go much further. I was pulling 55 inches of mercury manifold pressure on the two good engines to keep her in the air. We were lucky and Lake Balaton is under us and the other side of it is Russian held

so we breathe easier and everybody gets ready to jump.

I've got only one real gripe coming because I lost my good crush hat when I bailed out as I had been sleeping on it for a long time and it was just getting into shape.

Everybody lands OK but Plude breaks his foot when he tried to swing past some stakes and lands crooked. I landed near Tully, my co-pilot, and we were taken to Russian HQ. where the rest of the guys are. We stay in this small town for about a week, and then the Russians send us on a train to Bucharest. We had a pretty good time there. We stayed there for 19 days with plenty of good food and drinks. I'll bet they have the best beer in Europe right in Bucharest. We had a good time there and were pretty sore that the Americans sent us home to our base in Italy.

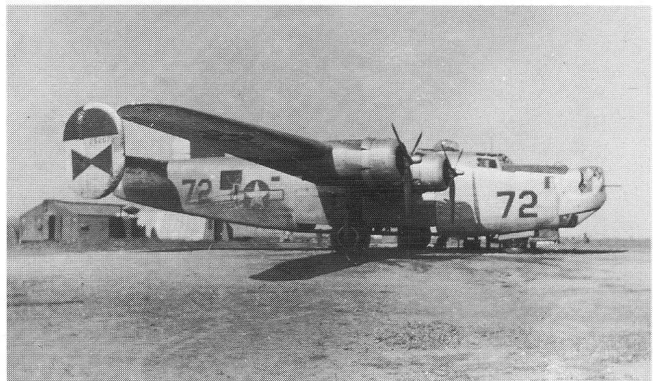
Naturally, when we get back to the base everybody wants to know all about the big time in Bucharest, but we give them a sob story about eating barley soup and sleeping on straw, but the dull fools still won't send us home, so guess we'll try the flak out again.

Be good,
Love John.

P.S. Metzler is sure to get the DFC, but they are trying to get him the D.S.C. (next to the Congressional Medal of Honor) for what he did, also getting the purple heart for burns and frost bite from the gas. Good Boy!



Mickey Ship #700 Able 12, shown with ground crew 1 to R Sgt Jesse Nogan, Cpl James Lowry, and Sgt Arthur Barkley



Baker 11, Flown by 1/Lt Richard Owsley and crew, returned early because of No #1 engine failure.