

I joined the 301st in July, 1944. Our crew of ten were sent to Grand Island, Nebraska to take delivery of a new B-17 Fortress. We flew to Grenier Field, New Hampshire, to be outfitted for overseas operations. Early one morning our crew reported on the flight line, were handed a sealed envelope with orders to open after reaching 12,000 feet altitude. The orders read to fly to Marrakech, Morocco, North Africa, with stops at Goose Bay, and Azores. From Marrakech we flew to our assigned 353rd Squadron located in an olive grove about ten miles from Foggia.

Our crew arrived at our Bombing Base in July. At the final briefing we were told to look at our 10 crew members--that the casualty reports show that two out of each crew were lost. In July the 15th Air Force lost 318 bombers. Much of the loss was from bombing of the Poelesti Oil Fields and refineries. The strategic bombing plan was to destroy the German oil and gas production. When the Poelesti Oil Fields were captured, the bombing had reduced their production of 709,000 tons of

crude per month to 77,000 tons -- a reduction of 90 percent. This was about the same statistics for the 16 refineries furnishing fuel to the German war machine.

At the end of the war German top generals said, "We failed primarily because your airpower robbed our skies of protective wings, our armies of mobility, our tanks of oil, and our factories of raw materials."

The 15th Air Force was made up of 24 heavy bomber Groups. Each Group consisted of four Squadrons. Each Squadron had approximately 20 planes. For a mission 7 planes from each Squadron was the normal, or 28 planes per Group. This meant that the 15th could put in the air at least 672 planes. With maximum effort the 15th could produce 800 bomber planes for a mission. There were always planes shot down, out of commission, or sidelined for parts.

On most missions anti-aircraft guns fired at our planes, as most targets were protected by heavy guns that could reach 28,000 feet. Targets, such as Vienna, Regensburg, Brux, Blechammer, Moosebierbaum, and Osweicin were heavily fortified. Around Vienna we were briefed that there were as many as 300 anti-aircraft guns. Even a railroad circled the city and the guns were mounted on rail cars and could be moved to position to fire at the planes regardless of the direction of the bomb run. Our plane returned from one mission with 200 holes from flak. Flak is the metal that is set to explode in many pieces after it reaches a pre-set altitude. Over the target area the sky is filled with black smoke from exploding schrapnel.

The German fighter planes that attacked our bombers were the Messerschmitt 109 and Messerschmitt 110, Focke-Wulf 190; and, about five months before the end of the war, Germany introduced the MC 262, a fighter jet plane with 50 MM rockets and four 30 MM cannon. This Messerschmitt fighter could bring down a big bomber.

The 15th Air Force had two heavy bombers, the B-17 and

the B-24. There were about 20,000 heavy bombers in the European War--about 12,000 B-24s and 8,000 B-17s.

The B-24 was built by Consolidated Aircraft and called the "Liberator". Later, production was turned over to Ford and the B-24s were mass produced at the Willow Run plant in Michigan. They were powered by four Pratt-Whitney radial engines at 1,850 RPM, each producing 1,200 HP. They could carry a 5,000 pound bomb load as normal, cruise at 215 MPH and had a ceiling of 28,000 feet. The range was about 2,100 miles in combat.

The B-17 was built by Boeing Aircraft Company of Seattle, Washington. It was called the "Flying Fortress". The "Fort" was powered by four Wright Cyclone 9 cylinder radial air cooled engines. Each engine produced 1,200 HP and operated at 1,820 RPM. The B-17 burned about 200 gallons of gasoline per hour. The B-17 could carry a 4,000 pound bomb load as normal. The plane could cruise at 162 MPH, and had a ceiling of 35,000 feet. The range was about 2,100 miles with a bomb load.

The B-17 carried a fuel load of 2,780 gallons. The fuel was stored in 12 tanks in the wings. Near the fuselage was a 425 gallon tank; in the center of the wing between the two engines were two tanks, each holding about 212 gallons of fuel; in the outer wing are 9 small tanks holding about 540 gallons. The tanks were self-sealing in case of puncture by enemy guns. In addition, there was a fuel transfer system that enabled fuel to be pumped from or to any tank. The B-17 was also equipped with two Bomb Bay fuel tanks that were attached to the bomb racks with a capacity of 410 gallons each, or 820 additional gallons. This made possible a total fuel load of 3600 gallons of fuel.

The oxygen for the crew is supplied by 18 bottles placed in different locations in the plane. One bottle will supply 5 hours of oxygen at 30,000 feet. Check valves shut off loss of complete system if a bottle is shot away.

Each engine has its own oil supply contained in a 37 gallon

self-sealing tank. Fully serviced, the four engines required 148 gallons of oil.

The dimensions of the B-17 were: wing span, 109 feet 9 inches; length, 74 feet 9 inches; height, 19 feet 1 inch.

The consolidated B-24 Liberator had a wing span of 110 feet; length, 67 feet 2 inches; and height, 18 feet.

In a U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, and a Systems Analyst Report, it was stated: "The B-17 was a more efficient combat aircraft than the B-24 from a viewpoint of bombing accuracy, life of aircraft, tons dropped for each effective sortie, and losses for each 1,000 effective sorties."

The B-17 was called a "forgiving" aircraft. It could fly when heavily damaged and under adverse conditions. The B-17 could fly higher, had a higher "in commission" ratio, and few mission aborts, fly tighter formation and could effectively be "ditched" (land in water). In combat 1.49 B-17s were lost per 100 sorties as compared to 2.02 B-24 losses on the same basis. The average B-17 flew 77 missions in the MTO, which was twice the average of the B-24. It flew 36 missions.

In fairness to the B-24, it had the advantage of 10 MPH faster climbing, it could cruise 10-15 MPH faster, and carry a 1,000 pound more bomb load.

The records show the 301st Group's role in the war. It served from the beginning to the end of the war, flew difficult missions, delivered more tons of bombs than any other AAF unit, logged the second most missions and shot down more German aircraft than any other bomb group in the 15th Air Force. The 301st lost the second highest number of bombers in the B-17 groups--137 planes.

Our crew lost two members; both were flying on other planes. Our Navigator, Lt. Parker, flew July 27, 1944, on a bomb mission to Vienna, attacking an aircraft factory. The plane was hit by flak, then attacked by German fighters. The plane caught fire and the crew bailed out. Some were killed. Lt. Parker

was taken prisoner of war.

About two months later, our Bombardier, Lt. Gubitosi, was making up missions as he had been sick. He was flying a night mission on November 25, 1944. The plane went down from flak damage, and Lt. Gubitosi was taken prisoner.

301st Bombing Missions, 15th Air Force
Combat Missions made by Delmer J. Dooley 1944-45

- Aug. 6 131 Bombers, target Marshaling Yards, Portes Les Valences.
- Aug. 7 266 Bombers, Blechammer, Germany oil refinery. Lost 2 Forts.
- Aug. 12 612 Bombers, Allied landing in Southern France. Target gun positions.
- Aug. 20 140 Bombers, hit the synthetic oil plant at Oswecin, Poland.
- Aug. 23 Bombed Vienna, 2nd best defended target in Europe, lost 13 bombers; heavy flak and fighters.
- Aug. 25 Bombed aircraft factory at Brno, Czechoslovakia.
- Aug. 26 Bombed railroad viaduct Borovnica, Italy.
- Aug. 28 Bombed oil targets at Moosbierbaum, heavy flak.
- Sept. 5 Bombed airfield, bridge, and Marshaling yard in Yugoslavia.
- Sept. 8 Bombed Marshaling Yards in Hungary and Romania.
- Sept. 17 Bombed in support of the Russian forces closing in on Hungary and the Balkans. 112 bombers delivered 264 tons of bombs.
- Sept. 21 Bombed airfield near Munich. Lost 7 bombers.
- Sept. 24 Bombed Brux oil refinery. Briefed for 350 German fighters in the area. We had escort of 400 American P-38s and P-51s, known as the Lightenings and Mustangs.
- Oct. 10 Bombed Marshaling yards at Treviso, Italy. 80 bombers sent, only 34 dropped bombs because of weather.

- Oct. 12 Bomed tactical targets, German lines in the Bolonga, Italy area; dropped incendiary and fragmentation bombs along the enemy front lines; made a second run over the target. Enemy flak.
- Oct. 14 Lost 37 bombers on Oct. 13. Today we bombed Blechammer and Oderal with 456 bombers, lost 7 bombers and 37 made emergency landings at Vis. One bomber in our Squadron 353 fell about 10,000 feet in one minute. The pilot recovered control of the plane.
- Oct. 16 Bomed oil targets in Blechammer area.
- Oct. 20 Bomed Brux oil refinery, heavy flak in area.
- Nov. 5 Bomed Vienna Florisdorf refinery. Radar malfunctioned and we made a second bomb run over the target at 28,000 plus feet. Plenty of flak. The 15th send 566 bombers, 500 went over the target. It was the largest attack by the 15th for one day.
- Nov. 11 This is Armistice Day. Bomed oil refinery at Brux. Due to bad weather dropped bombs on Salsburg Marshaling yard. 116 bombers dropped 307 ton of bombs. Lost 22 bombers.
- Thanksgiving rest leave on the Isle of Capri. Flew to coast, and took ship to the Isle.
- Dec. 15 Bomed Marshaling yards at Linz, Austria.
- Dec. 18 Bomed Odertal, near Vienna. The day before, the same area was bombed and about 50-60 German fighters attacked the B-17s--mostly ME 109s.
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day. Bomed Brux oil refinery. Because of weather, made two 360 degree turns to make the bomb run.
- Dec. 28 Bomed the oil storage facility at Regensburg. Dropped 227 tons of bombs.
- Dec. 29 Bomed marshaling yards at Innsbruck, Austria. Bad weather prevented all bombers to go over the primary target. 47 bombers hit the Innsbruck yards. 123

- bombers dropped their bombs on a locomotive repair shop at Castelfranco Veneto, Italy. Reported dropping 54 percent of bombs within 1,000 feet of aiming point.
- Jan. 4 Bomed Marshaling yards in Italy, Verona, Italy. Germans sent up jet powered MC 262. This was the 400th mission of the 301st.
- Jan. 19 Bomed railroad targets in Yugoslavia. Our Group bombed Brod north Marshaling yard.
- Jan. 21 Bomed oil targets Schwechat, Vienna.
- Jan. 31 Sent 805 bombers to bomb the Moosbierbaum refinery, dropped 1,357 tons of bombs. 30 bombers were lost, the most lost during one mission and for the remainder of the war.
- Feb. 1 Attacked the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum. Lost 2 B-17s from our group, the 301st.
- Feb. 25 Bomed the Linz main Marshaling yards in Austria with 362 tons of bombs.
- Feb. 28 Bomed targets in the Brenner Pass, the Verona-Parona railway bridge and the Marshaling yard at Conagliano; quite heavy flak.
- March 2 Bomed Marshaling yards at Linz, Austria.
- March 4 Last Mission. Bomed Marshaling yards at Zagrib. The 301st dropped 107 tons of bombs on the target. This was one of the largest missions of our group. Lost 2 planes from our Group. I flew Engineer in the lead plane with Col. Ernest Holmes, Commander of the 301st. We buzzed the field on return to Base. Happy Day!