

Gerald G. Smith Mission Diary

To the 456th Bomb Group Association,

My name is Michael J. Smith. I am the son of one of your men, Gerald G. Smith. My father passed away on April 23, 1974 of a heart attack when I was only 14 years old. Of course, like any son, I have many fond memories of my father, but the best times I can recall were when we were sitting around talking about flying the B-24. Unfortunately, we didn't have as much time as we thought, so there were many holes. When Dad passed away, I was given many of his articles from the War. I have his diary from Italy. I can give you some information which could help you 'fill in some holes.' At the same time, perhaps there is a possibility that I might be able to locate one of his crew, or someone that might remember Dad. Before I go on, let me tell how absolutely wonderful it is to check out your website. I visit it often, looking at the pictures, checking the nose art, etc. I will be looking very seriously at attending the 2002 reunion in Charleston. Keep me posted!

The following is a breakdown of his sorties and associated notes from the diary. I thought that you might find some of the 'runs' interesting. After April 1945, things slowed down for Dad and he ran several cargo runs up to northern Italy. He left Italy on June 13th and had several legs until he got back to Charleston, SC. He came home to Scranton, PA and eventually married Phyllis Smith. I also have notes which indicate his crew at one time were the following:

- Pilot – Brady B. Beverly
- Co-Pilot – Gerald G. Smith
- Navigator – John Cudone (my godfather)
- Bombardier – Robert E. Nace
- Engineer – Laurence S. Confright
- Radio Operator – Hershel Carpenter
- Gunner – Anthony Andriani
- Gunner – Burrell F. Martin
- Gunner – William C. Corrall
- Gunner – Willis E. Case

I believe that Dad flew in many different aircraft, but I remember him speaking fondly of 'The Baby' and 'Heavenly Body.' His diary references many ship numbers. His sorties are as follows and cross reference nicely with his diary:

1. 12/19/1944 Graz

2. 12/29/1944 - Salizburg

3. 1/4/1945 - Padua, M/Y - "Today we bombed Padua, our primary was Verona. Lots of flak at Verona - All kinds. Did not drop on primary target - we should have. Ship #866 05:37 Form#1 time. Ship too slow - recommend it carry less bombs."

4. 1/19/1945 - Brad RR Bridge, Yugoslavia. "Today we bombed Brad, in Yugo. - Easy target - Short flak - We hit three bridges really good! Ship #839 04:34 Form #1. Good ship but very cold on the crew."

5. 1/31/1945 - "Today the target was the Moosebierbaum Oil Refinery near Vienna. Lost #2 engine on Ship #866. Turned back just past Lake Balaton. No flak, No fighters. Dropped bombs on Germans near the lake. Hope we helped the Russians. No credit for mission - no buono."

6. 2/8/1945 - Vienna - "Today we bombed Vienna. We hit the marshalling yards there really good. Rather rough target too. Jerry put up lots of flak - not accurate. Ship #135 - Good heaters."

7. 2/20/1945 - Trieste Ship Yards - "Today we bombed Trieste Ship Yards with very good results too. Many fires observed. Visual bomb runs with scant flak. Ship #853. Cold as the devil -42°C. Airplane needed lots of repairs. Two cylinder head gauges 1-4 throwing oil. Electric suits in front - not enough power. No enemy fighters."

8. 2/22/1945. Klagenfurt M/Y (Pilstling) - "Today we bombed the Klagenfurt M/Y with good results. Visual run. Ship #717. Hard as hell on the controls. 07:11 Form #1. Very poor lead today. Not consistent at all. Too many S-Turns and 360s. But for all of our troubles, the mission was a success. A very big Armada of all the Air Forces in the ETO for a good smash at the enemy. Hope we raised plenty of hell for the enemy too. No enemy fighters."

9. 2/23/1945 - Gmund M/Y – “Today we were supposed to bomb the Gmund in southern Germany but due to cloud coverage we did not drop our bombs. We made runs on other alternates. Ship #717. 07:19 Form #1 time. Had extra gunners today. This 717 is a bitch to fly. Hard on controls and works a fellow very hard. No fighters.”

10. - 02/24/1945 - Vipintento MY. “Today we were to bomb the M/Y at Vipintento in north Italy, but due to adverse weather conditions we had to abandon this target. We tried the alternate targets and they too were blocked in by bad weather. We flew #7 position in Charlie Box. Lead ship kept wallowing around too much. Ship #717. Form #1 04:47. 717 very hard on controls, but lots of power. Flew a new tail gunner today. Last night a swell supper. pork chops, apple pie, peas, coffee, bread, butter. Multi buono.”

11. - 3/2/1945 - Linz Main M/Y – “Today we bombed Linz and how! Heavy flak and accurate. Lost #2 engine over the target, #3 soon after but was able to bring #3 back in again. Navigator really on the ball. Used big fence too. Landed at Zara to get fixed up, all facilities really okay too. Thank God for that. Zara is about thirty miles south of German lines. Pretty close, isn't it? But Zara is a Godsend to airman who need help to get home. No enemy fighters today. Multi Bad weather today, bad cloud layers. Was really ready for the sack tonight. No injuries aboard.”

12. 3/8/1945 - Kappensburg – “Today we flew a mission in direct support of the Russian front. Our primary was Nove Zamky but did not drop here. Hit an alternate. Had to be visual. Front lines only 5 miles away. Can't kill Joe's boys - although they did shoot flak at us near the Danube. Ship #717. 07:36 Form #1. Bad radio - Flew #4. No fighters - No casualties, arrived back low on gas, Formation stick not used - Sore ears tonight.”

13. - 3/13/1945 - Regensburg M/Y – “Today we bombed Regensburg in Germany with good results expected. Smoke rose above the clouds based at 10,000'. Swell mission - P-38 escort. Ship #855 07:06 Form #1. Good leads, Good formation. Multi-Sol - warm on the ground. Ship fair - 1-2-3 ran too hard. Interphone needs repair. All deficiencies reported. Scheduled tomorrow.”

14. - 3/14/1945 - Wiener Neustadt – “Today we bombed Wiener Neustadt in Austria. Good mission - met bad weather in Yugo going and coming from the target. No flak at target. Saw flak at Bruk though - very scant. Ship #742 - 05:49 Form #1. All defects of ship reported. Flew #3 position - Multi-work. Not scheduled tomorrow. Multi sack time due. Multi-sol - real warm. Received two letters tonight.”

15. 3/16/1945 - Amstetten M/Y – “Today we bombed Amstetten in Austria. Visual run. Ship #900. 06:19 form #1. Flew #3 position. Good ship. Hands multi-sore too. Bad clouds near our base. Saw several targets open on our way. Ballew bombed Knittelfeld. Easy missions. Scheduled tomorrow.”

16. 3/19/1945 - Muhldorf M/Y – “Today we bombed the M/Y at Muhldorf in Germany. Did a good job too. Visual run, about 10 min. Carried 1000 pounders. Flew position #3 in Charlie box. Lead not so good, bombed from 15,000. No flak, thank God! Ship #855 06:50 Form #1. All faults on ship reported. Received three letters tonight. Reported - Broadway Bills in Rome closed up!”

17. " 3/20/1945. “Today we were scheduled to bomb Kralupy deep inside Czechoslovakia - but due to weather conditions, we bombed the M/Y at Klagenfurt by ourselves. We became separated from the formation in the clouds. It was really rough on the formation too. Strictly no buono for anyone. Airplane wasn't too good. Flaps froze and the engineer had to force them with his feet. Damn poor. No interphone in nose - poor radio, multi-static. #4 supercharger wanted to run away all the time. Ship #089 - 05:05 Form #1. #3 position Baker Box. Hope that we get credit! No mail today – no fighters seen. P-51s helped us to safe territory.”

18. - 4/7/1945 - Brassanone RR Bridge -

19. - 4/8/1945 - Campo De Trens – “Today we bombed Campo De Trens in the Brenner Pass. We used 2000lb bombs. Flew position #5. Ship #543. 06:55 Form #1 Time. Good ship. Scant and heavy flak. Received 3 holes in ship. Weather not too good. Jerry also shot at us at Novara in the Po Valley. Guess they don't like us. Able and Baker boxes screwed up at the target. We ended up with 11 ships in Dog box.”

20. - 4/12/1945 - Nervesa RR Bridge – “Today we bombed the Nervesa RR bridge in north Italy. Our box hit the bridge really good. Ship #839 05:45 Form #1 Carried 500lb bombs.”

21. - 4/15/1945 - Ghedi, north Italy – “Today we bombed Ghedi in northern Italy - ammo dump. Good results observed. Ship #853. 06:35 Form #1. Plane cold. Flew position #5 good formation. Strange ship flew #7 up and back from the target. Would not identify himself other than colors of the day. No mail tonight.”

22. - 4/19/1945 - Linz M/Y – “Today we bombed Linz M/Y in Austria. Due to trouble with our racks we dropped early. Ship #853. 07:20 form #1.”

23. - 4/24/1945 - Friola Road Bridge – “Today we bombed the Road Bridge at Friola in north Italy. Very Good visual run - of course we made three bomb runs and we did get the bridge but good! Carried 6 1000 lb bombs. Flew #7 position. Baker Box. Ship #853 06:00 Form #1. Received three letters tonight. Plan to take a shower later. Scheduled tomorrow - same ship #5 position. Used multi-power today but we had lots of fuel to spare. Lead ship okay - no fooling around - good formation!”

24. - 4/25/1945 - Linz M/Y – “Today we bombed Linz M/Y in Germany. What a target too! Very heavy accurate flak. We had #2 engine knocked out. Received many large holes. No's #3 and 4 received hits also. Bad oil leaks - we made it home on three engines. Ship #853. 07:10 form #1. Multi-sol warm today at 23,600' -36°C. Too tired to write anymore. General Upthegrove and Col. Steed met our ship when we landed and we talked to both officers about the mission. They inspected our ships and all of the holes. Boys obtained multi-flak from the ship!”

I would be happy to speak with anyone who might be interested in chatting about the 456th, especially late 1944 - 1945, when my Dad was there. Looking forward to keeping up with the 456th.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Smith