

After the flames subsided and it was determined there wouldn't be another explosion, a line was formed to pick up the remains of the crew. (That's when I found the cam).

The cause of the accident was listed as Pilot Error: The "good" engine on the same side as the "runaway" was shut down while the a/c was in a bank.

The crater was pointed out to replacements to emphasize carelessness could kill as easily as flak and fighters. The crater was still there when we left Italy.

The a/c was a "G" model with the nose turret operated from the ship's hydraulic system. The Crew Chief was T/Sgt. Robert E. Rudd. The a/c hard stand was the first South of the taxiway after turning off the runway. (The hard stand was used by the "meat wagon" when landing South).

The a/c had the reputation of being a "lemon". It would do strange things unexpectedly; some even said it tried to fly backwards. The best pilots in the Squadron, accompanied by the Line Chief, et al, flew it in an effort to track down its peculiarities.

I believe Joe Powers, Ralph Pellegrini and Johnnie Massey can corroborate the preceding.

*The "a/c down for the day" is another story but not relevant to the accident.

MEMOIRS OF A POW IN ROMANIA 1944
Richard B Williams + Robert B Ralston (739)
1995

FROM CERIGNOLA TO BUCHAREST - 1944

The 739th Bomb Squadron, 454th Bomb Group made up of B-24 Liberator Bombers arrived at our base near the little town of Cerignola, Italy on January 25, 1944. We set up our operation in what had been an orange and olive grove. We lived in tents large enough to accommodate four cots and an inverted 55-gallon steel drum in which we burned high octane aviation fuel for heat. Some poor souls got the fire too hot and saw their tents and all their possessions go up in bonfire style. There were no more than three or four permanent buildings in the area so most of our activities took place in tents of various sorts.

Our first mission to Orvieto Air Field was over northern Italy and fairly close to Lake Nemi, the subject of the painting by George Inness which hung in the parlor at Sunny Crest and provided a clue by which I could let the family know approximately where I was based.

Thirteen missions later I thought I was over the hump, but my superstitious tendencies got the best of me when I rolled out of my sack in that pre-dawn darkness on April 21, 1944. "Completed thirteen missions," I thought. "That should be a good omen." I was tired and rather hoped the mission would be scrubbed because of weather but it wasn't. I had an odd feeling and it wasn't good.

We hastened through breakfast, briefing, and all other preliminaries and boarded our B-24 which we called "Bugs Bunny" for our Navigator, Bob "Bugs" Ralston. In a short time we were airborne and forming for our mission. As we circled, we saw thick black smoke billowing up - one of the crews had apparently turned into a dead engine and crashed. It was rough but we couldn't stop for that.

By now we were headed toward the spur of the boot and there was the Adriatic Sea beyond. Before very long we could spot the coast of Yugoslavia. We continued to climb and the temperature began to drop, but we were wearing our fleece-lined jackets, our flak suits, and steel helmets over our fleece-lined flight helmets. As we passed over the mountains of Yugoslavia, we saw those beautiful P-38 fighters flying cover for us. Unfortunately, they were not going all the way. We continued on over the tip of Bulgaria and across the Danube which we could barely see because of the increasing cloud bank below us. Everything seemed to be going too well. We had seen neither enemy fighters nor flak.

As we approached the target area, which was the marshaling yards in Bucharest, there was a thick layer of clouds below but we flew on. The Lead Bombardier had opened his bomb bays and we

followed suit. His first string of bombs could be seen and now it was our turn. "Bombs away!" I called over the intercom and closed our bomb bay doors. Now we were making our turn and heading for home. I thought "this is too easy!" and sure enough it was. At that moment all hell broke loose. Three fighters attacked us. Our gunners were firing away at the fighters and I thought we were holding our own when suddenly there was a crash. I saw stars, literally. Something had hit the back of my head. The plane lurched and seemed to be heading into a dive at high speed.

I looked at Bob Ralston and saw blood running out of his left eye, I grabbed a compress and tied it over his eye - then tried to communicate with the rest of the crew. I could get no contact. The intercom and oxygen systems had been knocked out and the passage to the flight deck blocked. I felt the back of my head. Whatever had hit me had ruptured my steel helmet and lodged in my skull, where it remains to this day. Already blood had soaked through the bandage on Bob's eye.

Bob and I made a quick decision. I attached his parachute to his harness and then attached mine and opened the nose wheel door. I tried to get him to jump but he balked and insisted I go first. To this day neither one of us could tell you who jumped first. A report I have seen said Bob went first, but Bob thinks I went first. The oxygen had been knocked out so neither one of us was very clear. From that point I remember nothing until I came to and found myself floating toward the ground. It was absolutely quiet - no sound of anything. "Why don't I hear birds?" I thought. Then the silence was broken by a Romanian yellow nose ME109 fighter which headed toward me. I did not know what to expect. I had heard stories of American airmen who parachuted over Bulgaria and were shot at by the Bulgarian fighter pilots. One million thoughts went quickly through my head as I hung there. Fortunately, this Romanian pilot was not blood thirsty. Anyway, he went on giving me his prop wash which made me swing violently. He circled two or three times, each time coming close enough to give me his prop wash and make me swing more violently. As I got close to the ground he went on his way.

At about one hundred feet the earth seemed to rush up to meet me. This being my first and only jump I had not known what to expect. I landed in a plowed field which softened the impact. I pulled in my parachute and quickly headed for a hedge row between two fields, much as a child hides by pulling a pillow over his head. But it didn't matter because a group of peasants in the field had seen me and, armed with pitchforks and shovels, they approached. I took off my Bombardier wings and pushed them deeply into the earth. The peasants waved in a manner that made me think I was to go away, but they were waving for me to come to them. I got up and we started toward each other. They were a friendly band of peasants who kept saying "Fratres American Nemfs, (Nazi) nui bun." All this meant that they liked the Allies and did not like nor trust the Nazi's. In spite of their feelings, they were afraid of the Nazi's and would never offer to help Allied airmen escape.

The group of peasants was friendly and chattering like crazy and over and over again I heard "Fratres American, Nemfs, nui bun..." All this as we walked along a dirt road to a little peasant village with its gaily decorated buildings. As we reached the village we were met by Romanian soldiers who escorted me to the town hall which was their headquarters. All of the peasants who had brought me in, followed right along. Once inside, they offered me some "Easter bread" and milk. They then gave me a piece of cake and some goat's milk. I was managing to drink the goat's milk but I must have made a face because they asked me if I would like some sweet milk. I said "Yes, thank you," and they put some sugar in the milk.

After much jabbering they offered me a drink of tsuica. I accepted and they sent a pretty young girl out to get it. She was dressed more like a city girl and I figured that she was a refugee from Bucharest rather than a peasant or country girl. She came back with a water tumbler of what looked just like "white lightning" from Shifletts Hollow, near Charlottesville, Virginia.. She took a sip supposedly to show me that it wasn't poison, then gave it to me. The tsuica was good and at that moment hit the spot. She did too! She was pretty and I wanted her to stand by.

In a little while a man dressed in civilian clothes came in. There was much conversation in Romanian between this man and the soldiers. Then he turned to me and said, "Come, I am taking you to Headquarters."

The two of us climbed into an open-bed horse drawn wagon and started what seemed a long slow ride to the next village where there was some kind of Nazi headquarters. Once started on this journey, this man said, "You are lucky! For you the war is over." I didn't figure it out nor did I figure him. He went on to say that he had worked for the ABC Clean Heat Corporation in Chicago (probably as a salesman, if at all, for he never stopped talking). It was a rough dirt road with many ruts and by the time we reached our destination my rib or ribs had begun to hurt like everything and I had trouble getting my breath. I had broken the ribs jumping out of the plane when I hit the sides of the nose-wheel door opening. Until this time I had not been conscious of my broken ribs. Anyway, they helped me out of the wagon and into the headquarters where they allowed me to lie on a cot. There were two or three Nazi officers who talked to my "clean heat friend(?). I could make little out of their conversation. The tsuica may not have been poison but it seemed to have had the effect as well as the look of "white lightning."

Before long we were joined by other airmen that had been captured that day. This was when Bob Ralston and I got together again and I had his 24-hour navigation watch which thoroughly confused the Romanians with its 24-hour dial.

By now it was beginning to get dark. We were taken to a railroad station and the Romanians kept saying "Choo, choo Choo choo." at least I thought they were saying "Choo, choo" it seemed to make sense. After all who hasn't said "Choo, choo" at some point in his life when he was referring to the old steam-driven locomotive?

It was dark when the train pulled in and we were loaded into one of the box cars. There were civilians, mostly peasants, in the car, but peasants or city folk, we could understand when they shook their fists at us and shouted, "Gangster American!" Our train ride was to Giurgiu (Choo, choo). It was not a long ride and when we arrived we were taken to what seemed like a makeshift garrison. I can remember the dimly-lit room with high ceilings and a line of bunks with straw mattresses. It was here that Bob and I started our search for the rest of the crew. This amounted to asking other airmen who came in. No one knew anything. Floating down in my parachute I had seen numerous fires from crashes and wondered if any had been our plane.

We got little if any sleep that night - my ribs were giving me a fit and we didn't know what was ahead for us. I guess I questioned our decision to jump, but we couldn't change that now.

Early in the morning we were awakened and marched to a garage where we met other POW's. Bob mentioned this because he remembered seeing a '37 Ford, 4-door Cabriolet with brand new Goodyear tires. Also in the garage, a Romanian Sergeant threw a chair at one of the guys with an injured leg. We had to restrain one of our guys from killing the S.O.B. From the garage we were taken to the hospital in Giurgiu.

First we were taken to the basement where we were stripped of our clothes and each of us was put in what looked like a large oval galvanized tub. Peasant women who worked in the hospital bathed us. We were then given hospital gowns and taken up to a large ward-like room. It was a bright, cheerful room with big windows which let in the warm sunlight.

After some time the doctor came around. He was a rather large man, possibly in his late forties, tastefully dressed - almost a Brooks Brothers traditional. He stood at the foot of my bed and with a warm smile greeted me, "Hello Richie, my little Yudi." At first I wondered why he singled me out as a Jew. Then I remembered that we had been stripped and bathed and apparently the peasant women had reported everything - (in Romania, only Jews were circumcised). Anyway, it became a little joke and our pretty petite nurse (we called her Mistress Tina) who was in training to become a doctor stood at the foot of my bed rubbing one finger on the other like one child teasing another, said "Yudi, Yudi, Yudi." "Aw, gowan, Tina," I said. She stopped. "Mistress Tina to you, she said, half joking. At least they were warm and friendly.

Dr. Ionescu Militiade was a friendly sort, much like people back home. He was above all a gentleman. He used to bring his young son of about ten or twelve to see us. Together, they would bring cigarettes and American magazines. In a 1939 issue of "Town and Country," I found a picture of

my good friends, Charlie and Elizabeth Hooff of Alexandria, Virginia. Also, I found a picture of Moe Clark of Orange, Virginia in "Spur".

While in the hospital, I had a reaction to a tetanus shot given for the wound in my head. Dr. Ionescu took blood out of my arm and put it into my leg. Then he said that I should have milk or in Romanian "lapte." A little while later a peasant girl was on her hands and knees washing the floor. When she came between our beds, Bob Ralston got her attention and pointed to me saying "Lapte, lapte!" Whereupon, she bared her breast and cupping it in her hand said "Lapte, lapte." We could still have fun and Bob Ralston was a great one for that. One morning, Dr. Ionescu was talking to us and said, "I want to thank you for destroying the University of Bucharest." Remembering we bombed through an overcast sky and depended on the accuracy of the Lead Bombardier - just one man, I am not surprised. I just didn't understand what Dr. Ionescu meant when he said "I want to thank you."

Following is my first letter to Mother and Father from the hospital.

April 25, 1944

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis C. Williams
5315 Cary Street Road
Richmond, Virginia
United States of America

Dear Mother and Dad:

I am a prisoner of war in a Romanian hospital and will be moved to an internment camp in the near future. The Romanians are giving us very good treatment. The chief surgeon is excellent and very nice to us. The Romanian Red Cross lady brings us cigarettes and this paper. There are two magazines (American - 1938) "Town and Country" and "County Life." In one I found picture of Mo Clark and in the other I found an announcement of Charlie Hooff's wedding. Bob Ralston is with me now and we pray that it will continue that way. Please don't worry. I am in good health and pray that you all are. You might get in touch with the Red Cross at home and find out about sending packages. I would like toilet articles, cigarettes and candy but of course the Red Cross can tell you all about it. It seems to me John Skelton was Vice-Consul to Romania some years back. Is this not true/* Outside the lilacs are just beginning to bloom and the forsythia is in full bloom. They remind me of home.

My love to you both and all at home.

Devotedly,
Richard

2nd Lieutenant Richard B. Williams
O-752731

American Prisoner of War
c/o Red Cross of Romania

(* John Skelton Williams, Jr., was Vice-Consul from 1921 to 1924.)

Altogether, we were in the hospital between two and three weeks. It seemed longer but everyone there was very friendly. On one occasion, Dr. Ionescu's young son brought us some beer which was a welcome treat.

One night shortly before we left the hospital for Bucharest, Dr. Ionescu had some steaks cooked for us. This was really quite a change from the spinach soup that we usually had.

The following is a report of Earl W. Parker, Staff Sergeant, AAF, No. 182169965, Nose Gunner in our airplane:

"On 21 April, while flying over the capitol of the country involved, three fighters attacked at 11:00 o'clock. Shooting fast, they hit with three 20 millimeter shells. At that moment, the interphones went out. I turned my turret in so that I could see the navigation compartment in order to let them know that the interphones were out, and I saw Lieutenant Williams bandaging the head of Lieutenant

Ralston. Blood had already soaked through the bandages. I turned front to see the fighters and then, none coming in, turned rear once more and saw that the nose wheel doors were open. Lieutenant Williams was putting a parachute on Lieutenant Ralston. He called for me to come into the compartment, which I did, and I stood behind Lieutenant Williams while he helped Lieutenant Ralston over the nose wheels and into the well. Lieutenant Williams jumped immediately after him. Williams did not appear to be injured. I did not see the parachutes open.

Note: Bob Ralston believes that I centered Parker's nose turret so he could get out. Bob later got a report from C. W. Weir, who was the Pilot, that the Flight Engineer managed to work his way through the passageway from the flight deck and then stopped Parker from bailing out.

Five planes lower down reported seeing the men passing, with parachutes opened. There is no supposition as to why they jumped, except that Williams thought Lieutenant Ralston was so wounded that he needed to be gotten out, and he jumped in order to take care of him, or that their oxygen went out. AAF says under those circumstances, their chances of being a prisoner are enormous or they may have trekked off and are now hiding trying to make their way out of the country.

A letter was also sent to my mother from Harriette Vaden of the American Red Cross in Italy whose parents knew my parents. Harriette was from Richmond. The letter read as follows. (Censored by H.S. Vaden A.R.C.)

To: Mrs. Louis Williams
Cary Street Road
Richmond, Virginia

From: H.S. Vaden A.R.C.
A.P.O. 785 c/o P.M.
New York, N.Y.

May 29, 1944
Italy

Dear Mrs. Williams,

I have wanted to write you so often in the past 5 weeks but have been unable to do it until I knew you had been notified by the War Dept. that Dick is missing. I remember the raid only too well. I was at the 454th that afternoon and watched our planes come in. The first crew down told me about Dick and it wasn't easy for me to finish serving the rest of the boys. As soon as possible I asked a friend of Dick's what happened. It seems that Dick and his friend Bugs had to jump from the plane because their oxygen supply was shot away and they couldn't get back up into the rest of the ship probably due to the entrance being blocked due to an exploding shell. Also Bugs was slightly wounded and we figure Dick felt he had to get him out. All communication with the rest of the crew was gone so he couldn't talk to his pilot. Dick and Bugs both jumped and their chutes opened. I know this. Several of the gunners on board were wounded, but Weir (pilot) brought the ship back after throwing nearly all the equipment out. The ship was badly shot up and Dick and Bugs did the only thing they could. Dick had given Bugs first aid and bandaged him up. This is about all that any of us know and we are sure that they are all right. The Red Cross usually notifies you in 6 weeks when boys are made prisoners. Sometimes it takes longer.

Mother wrote me that she and Dad had been to see you. I'm so glad that you managed to see each other and I hope you will often.

I talked to Dick the night of April 20th. The next day was his 14th mission. He is a grand person and you have all the reason in the world to be proud of him. I'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely
Harriette

GIURGIU TO THE SCHOOLHOUSE IN BUCHAREST

When we entered the hospital the Romanians had taken our G.I. shoes and left us with our fleece-lined flight boots. Their belief was that it would help discourage any escape attempts. Well, the

fleece-lined boots were not very comfortable in warm weather, not to mention their total lack of support for our feet.

Bob Ralston and two other POW's and I were discharged from the hospital - probably to make room for more injured POW's - and we were taken to a garrison in Giurgiu which looked like it might have been a military school of sorts. It was late afternoon when we arrived at the garrison, and we were fed soon thereafter - a really light meal. After all, the Romanians did not have an abundance of food. Following the supper, such as it was, we were put in a barred room with floor boards about halfway to the ceiling so we could not stand erect. Well, we did want to sleep so we wouldn't be doing much standing.

That night the four of us were sitting in semi-darkness - the hospital had been so much more pleasant with its sunny exposure - when three Romanian officers came into our room. We didn't know what to expect, but they were pleasant and invited us to come into a larger, meeting type room with a big table in the center and a single dim light hanging over it. Of these three officers, one was a Major and the other two were Captains. The Major, like so many Romanian officers who talked to us said he had spent many years in the United States. In any case, they all spoke English and appeared to have pro-Ally leanings.

These officers spread a big map of Europe on the table and pointed out the fronts. They told us that Hitler was headed west and was determined to cross the English Channel. "Who," they asked "is going to stop him?" "We are, we Allies are" we answered almost in unison. We Americans had a convincing way about us because we were proud of our country and our people - at home and abroad - were filled with confidence. We believed in US and we had a purpose. We were a cocky foursome and the Romanian officers seemed to like us.

These officers brought up a point that night that has always interested me. They indicated that they would like to see the Allies come up through Turkey and the Dardanelles into the Balkans and Eastern Europe. I don't know whether they also told us or I learned later, that Churchill wanted the Allies to use that route, but Stalin and Roosevelt vetoed it.

The officers visit ended on a friendly note. It seemed obvious to me that they did not like their relationship with the Nazis. I don't think they had much trust for the Russians either. They seemed to be searching for some kind of reassurances. Maybe over-confidence even in our own situation helped.

We had a reasonably good night's sleep on the straw mattresses - bed bugs and all. The next morning we were awakened and loaded into a pick-up truck for our transfer to Bucharest. It was a bright sunny day and our trip took us through the beautiful rolling countryside that looked much like Albemarle, Orange, and Madison, my favorite Virginia counties. After all, it was early Spring, and everything looked gorgeous with no signs of the ravages of war. The trip of approximately 50 or 60 miles was uneventful but that beautiful countryside made me feel just a little homesick.

Our destination was the Iron Guard Barracks in Bucharest. There were already many allied airmen there - mostly American - who were being held for interrogation by the Romanians. In other words, it was a kind of holding point for the POW's before sending us to "the Schoolhouse" which was designated "Lagarule de Prisoneri No. 13." In the garrison we were held in a large room with many double-decker bunks. Every time we wanted to go to the latrine, which was outside in another building, we had to get a Romanian guard to go with us. All the guards were Romanian but there were some German soldiers billeted in the barracks.

On one of these trips to the latrine I ran into some young German soldiers washing up. I will always remember one particularly good-looking young German who gave us a friendly greeting and spoke very good English. This young fellow was about average build with curly blonde hair and a winning smile. He was ever so eager to learn about Hollywood and the movie stars. I told him all I could remember about the studios and night clubs from my two visits there. I think his ambition was to get to Hollywood as soon as the war ended. My Romanian guard who could understand nothing became bored with the whole proceedings and kept tapping me on the shoulder and motioning me back to the security area. I have thought of that young German many times over the years and have wondered

where he wound up. I saw him maybe once again while I was in the barracks.

While we were in the Iron Guard Barracks, we were interrogated by a Captain Christie. He was an overweight Romanian captain who spoke good English and had cooked up a good story to try to get us to talk. He claimed to have lived and worked in Detroit for some time before the war. I don't remember whether he explained his return to Romania. He wanted to impress me with the fact that he had lived and worked in the United States for many years. He started talking about things he thought might be familiar to me hoping to get me into a friendly talking mood.

In trying to trick me into telling him something, Captain Christie claimed to know all about our crew. I knew nothing and what Captain Christie told me made no sense at all. Later, comparing notes with Bob Ralston, we decided that he was telling us the same story which we found rather ridiculous.

The second day of our stay in the Iron Guard Barracks, one or two American fliers had tried to escape. Apparently, they had made their way to the countryside where they had run into peasants working in their fields. Most Romanian peasants liked the Allies and were very friendly, but they were afraid for their own safety and were not likely to help Allied airmen escape. Fearing that they themselves might become involved and be severely punished they would turn the would-be escapees over to the Romanian authorities. In this case, the fleeing fliers were turned over to Romanian soldiers who returned them to the Iron Guard Barracks where they were placed in solitary confinement.

After about three days at the Iron Guard Barracks, we were moved to the Schoolhouse-"Lagarule de Prisoneri No. 13" - which was on the southside of Bucharest. It was a fairly large building not unlike some of the older school buildings I have seen in this country. The basement or ground floor was a little over half above ground level. Therefore, there were steps from the street level up to the main entrance. It was a typical main entrance to a school building of that size and age. You can be sure we never used the main entrance.

Off to the left of this entrance as we faced the school, there was a tall fence with barbed wire running along the top. Close to the building there was a gate in the fence opening into a side yard. Immediately to the right inside the fence was a side door into the building which opened onto a landing with steps to the first floor and to the basement. This door was used for anything and anybody brought into the building. We were taken through this side door and onto the first floor where we were checked-in. The Romanian Colonel who was in charge of the prisoner of war camp had his quarters on this floor. He was terribly overweight and could bellow like a bull. It was said that he would eat a dozen eggs each morning for breakfast and could eat a whole leg of lamb at a sitting. It turned out he was awfully lazy and we didn't see much of him.

From the main floor there were wide marble steps to the basement, and there was a wide marble staircase to the second floor. We were escorted up these steps to our room which was on the front of the building and overlooked the street. There was a park across the street and a Greek Orthodox Church about half a block up the street.

The room was bright and sunny and had three rather large windows, wooden casement type, with black paper tacked to the inside of the windows themselves for black-out. The openings had barbed wire instead of screen wire, and that might have been an advantage because I feel that having no screens more air would come in, and we didn't worry about flying insects anyway. There were about 10 old iron beds in this room and each had a straw mattress complete with bed bugs. With 10 of these beds in the room, there wasn't much space to walk around. Usually there was a Romanian guard in the hall outside.

The hall outside our room was rather wide and there was a table with a light over it. What better place for a bridge game which was going on all the time. Bridge seemed to be the popular game and had many kibitzers. Since there was only one deck of cards and one table large enough, bridge was the popular game and that was the popular place to be if you knew bridge.

Passing the card game, we would run into a large fairly narrow washroom with a line of wash basins along one wall. Usually two Russian barbers were set-up by the opposite wall (they, too were prisoners). They understood no English but appeared to know Romanian and had an excellent sense of

humor. They had a line they thought was real funny, and one or the other would say it with an uproarious laugh "F___ 'em and feed 'em fasoli, ok? F___ 'em and feed 'em beans, ok?" It was funny the way they said it and they seemed to have so much fun saying it over and over.

On the opposite side of the hall from our room there was a large auditorium complete with stage. In this auditorium, we started having church services almost every Sunday. With the help of Romanian Princess Catherine Caradja, the American prisoners were given a few Anglican prayer books for the services, and maybe one or two hymnals. Because there were so few hymnals, some of us bought notebooks (they were real small) in the canteen and copied some of the hymns in them. One particular hymn that I copied in mine was "The King of Love My Shepherd Is." I tried to write as much of it as I could because I remembered that mother had told me at some time that it was one of her favorite hymns. Not knowing whether I would find one of the prayer books at any other time, I also copied the 91st Psalm in my notebook. I read it every night before I went to bed. It gave me strength.

I believe one of the POW's in our room conducted the services. If I am not mistaken this fellow had planned to start training to become a Baptist minister right after the war. In any case, I think almost all of the POW's attended the services.

We may have had barbed wire on the windows and a Romanian guard at the door, but our room, crowded as it was, was bright and sunny. In the mornings we would first go downstairs to the mess hall to get our breakfast, which usually was imitation tea and brown bread. We all sat at bench-type tables. After we finished breakfast, most of us returned to our rooms and tried to get busy about something. One of our roommates, Lewis Armistead of Beacon Hill, Boston, when forced to jump from his aircraft, had grabbed a book that "he just happened to have with him" on his last mission. The book was "So Little Time" by J.P. Marquand. It was a delightful book and very much in demand. My turn came and I borrowed it.

On one bright sunny morning after breakfast I picked up the book and settled in to do some reading. Just then I heard the wailing of the siren outside, and the guards inside the building started yelling "Alarum! Alarum!" Outside our window we could see people scurrying through the streets to the air raid shelters shouting, "Adipost! Adipost!" Some of the air raid shelters, such as they were, were located in the park across the street from the Schoolhouse. Actually, many were no more than slit trenches which offered very little protection against bombing raids.

We didn't stand at the windows very long and watch, we headed for the basement on the run. Most of us had wooden shower clogs for shoes so you can imagine the clatter we made as we ran down the two flights of stairs to the basement. When we reached the basement, some would huddle under the marble table for protection - and later reflected on how stupid we were. If the table had cracked and large pieces of marble fell on us, we really would be hurting. Many of us would sit on the floor with our backs against the wall and our knees drawn up under our chins. Some of these bomb strikes were right close and I can remember that after a string of bombs had hit we might find ourselves about six feet away from the wall. The concussion as the bombs exploded bounced us right across the floor. "Were you scared?" someone would ask. "Was I?" Was all I could answer. What do you think? In the area of the park across the street there was an anti-aircraft gun which we called "Snapping Jack." That of course added to all the sound and fury. Finally when the "all clear" sounded, we heaved a sigh of relief and climbed back up the stairs to find some kind of activity. The bridge game outside our room was already in session, kibitzers and all. The truth is it was almost a continuous operation.

I went right back to our room and picked up "So Little Time" with the idea of reading 'till lunch time. At lunch we again went down to the mess hall. Often lunch consisted of bowls of what looked like unflavored macaroni with paprika sprinkled over it and some more brown bread. Some of the guys wouldn't touch the macaroni and would slide it down the table to me. I ate it because it was filling and I was usually hungry. Also, I didn't lose nearly as much weight as some of the others. We learned that we had to watch the brown bread because one or two of the fellows had found glass in it. The lunch and dinner meals varied a little. Sometimes we might have choppa (onions) and apa (water) with brown bread. Possibly we might have spinach soup with the usual brown bread. Often we had goats milk

cheese with cucumbers and brown bread. On rare occasions, we might get a very small piece of mutton - chewable if we were lucky, otherwise it was gristle.

For some time the kitchen and mess hall were run by the Russian prisoners. They got what they wanted and the Americans got the leftovers. The Russian prisoners also seemed to have more freedom. One afternoon I looked out a window and saw four or five Russians walking down the street with a Romanian guard. Well, finally, we got a senior American officer in charge of the kitchen. He had some of the American enlisted POWs helping him and our food got right much better.

On sunny days at times when we were not expecting the 15th Air Force, we spent a lot of time looking out of the windows waving to the people on the streets. There was always something going on. Occasionally, there would be an open-bed wagon filled with the round loaves of brown bread stopped by the side gate waiting for someone to take the loaves in. There never was any cover on them.

Frequently, there was the peasant farmer in his open wagon riding by. We figured he must be a Greek Orthodox because he would start crossing himself, making the sign of the cross, when he reached the far side of the church and by the time he reached the Schoolhouse, his hand was going almost straight up and down and he was laughing so hard he obviously wasn't worried about that. He just kept that hand going up and down while he waved to us with his other hand. He came by so often we felt we knew him and began looking for him.

Every city or town no matter where it is, has some pretty young girls and Bucharest, the "Paris of the Balkans", was no exception. Of course the young girls liked to walk down the street by the Schoolhouse with all us young fellows waving and yelling to them. There were two who walked by often, usually in the afternoons. One afternoon when they were walking by, it started raining but they didn't seem to mind. They started skipping instead of running and they were soaked through their pretty white blouses, which were almost "see through" anyway. You know all the guys at the windows liked that.

Some of the Romanian words and phrases that Ed Lyman taught us fit right in when these girls walked by. Ed was a P-51 fighter pilot who was downed on a Ploesti raid and wound up in the Schoolhouse. He started teaching French and Romanian to those of us who wanted to refresh French and learn Romanian. Taking the classes was both fun and interesting. Some of the best lines we learned in Romanian were: "N'am vazut niceodate o dimnisora asa da frumoasa" meaning "I have never seen a girl so beautiful." Another was "Ce placere Pentru ochu" meaning "What pleasure to the eyes," and of course "buna dimeneata" meaning "Good morning." These are just a sample of the lines we learned thinking we might yell at the young girls as they walked by the Schoolhouse. Believe me, we tried out some of the sentences. All this was usually done in the afternoons because the day air raids usually came before noon.

Also in the afternoon, the POW's who wanted to were allowed to go out into the side yard. That was one way of getting some exercise. Princess Catherine had gotten a basketball for us. There were various activities going on every day. For instance, there was an effort by one group working in teams to dig out underneath the Schoolhouse. Here the work was slow because the tools were poor and it had to be done when any guard on duty was out of earshot. To be honest, I learned about this activity through the grapevine. It was something that had to be kept very quiet.

After supper each night there was always the question of whether or not the R.A.F. (Royal Air Force) would come over. These raids and the raids by the 15th Air Force during the day always worried us. However, the Romanians thought that both the 15th Air Force and the R.A.F. knew where we were and avoided us just like they had missed the Red Cross freight car which had been parked in the marshaling yards for some time because it had a big red cross painted on top.

When the R.A.F. came we would hear the wailing of the siren then the guards would start shouting "Alarum! Alarum!" and we would hear people outside running down the street shouting "Adipost! Adipost! Just as they did in the daytime raids. As usual we would run for the basement. Again, we would try to sit on the floor with our backs against the wall and our knees drawn up under our chins. As during the daytime raids, the concussion of the bombs would cause us to bounce across the

floor. That was a bit frightening but there was another aspect. The R.A.F. used "screamers" on their bombs and that really was scary. After the "all clear" sounded, we heaved a sigh of relief and most of us lit up a cigarette. We probably smoked many more cigarettes after these raids, but these cigarettes were the Nationals - a Romanian cigarette which was about half the diameter of an American cigarette and made with really dry black tobacco. The Nationals came in little paper packs made of coarse paper without any foil or cellophane. When our supply was low and the canteen was closed so we couldn't buy any we would smoke what we had, butt it and save the butt. The next time we wanted a cigarette we would smoke the butt. When the butt got too short to hold, we would butt it again and save the tobacco. When we had saved enough of the tobacco we would burn a cigarette paper off one of the guards and "roll our own". By the time we smoked that hand-made cigarette, the tobacco was really black and strong.

We tried to keep busy about things when we were not sitting out air raids in the basement. Americans can do all kinds of things if they set their minds to it. Someone suggested monopoly. Well some of the fellows got together and built a monopoly board with almost all the little details. Many heads are better than one and, with suggestions from all, this turned out to be a pretty complete game.

One day some of us were in our room having a bull session and the Red Cross lady came in and gave each of us a card to write home. She said we could send four cards or one letter a month to our families. I noticed Glenn Johannsen started writing right away and thought he might have some good ideas of things to write home about. I said something to him and he showed me his card on which he had started writing "I'm alright, alright, alright, alright, _____." He said that was all he was going to write. I couldn't believe it, though, in a way, it did make some sense.

Some of these "bull sessions" were right much fun. After all we did have a good group of roommates. Among them were Bennie Lindley, Bob Lynch, Glenn Johannsen, Lewis Armistead, Bob Ralston, John Botkin, Julian Currie, Bob Cheesman, Jay Blanchard, I think Roy Johnson from Georgia, and I can't remember the others. Naturally, the subject right often settled on girls. I'll never forget Bennie Lindley sitting on the edge of his bed saying, "Boy, when I get home I'm going to keep my wife barefoot and pregnant and in the kitchen." I hadn't heard that saying before, and the feeling with which he said it sounded really funny. (I must admit I have heard it often since then.)

After some weeks, we discovered that there actually was a shower room in the basement, and we were going to get a turn to take a shower, Boy, that sounded great! When we got to the shower room we found three or four showers about eight feet above the floor and though the water seemed to go in all directions, the shower even trickling was a welcomed sight. The showers didn't get rid of all the lice, but they may have helped a little. In any case they were kind of refreshing.

Our little friends which stuck to us, sometimes caused a comical sight. Two or three fellows would be standing talking to each other when suddenly one would loosen his belt, unzip his fly, and start scratching. If he happened to be near a bed he would drop his pants, sit on the bed, and really go to work with great intensity. So you see, as far as the little critters were concerned the showers didn't do much good.

The Romanian government had to pay us something. In one of my little notebooks I had written "6000 Lei rec'd through June 30" under that I had written "3000 Lei July 2." You can tell I am not sure what they paid me but whatever it was it enabled me to buy some of the pastries and cakes from the Romanian who ran the canteen for us. Of course he also stocked a few other things. Some of the things I found listed were "cig", "pastry", "nugat", "beer", "roll", "matches", "cig holder", "cake", "ice cream", "note books", and "paper". All these items with, I believe, the price in Leis I had written on one page in the notebook. There were others on another page but these items give an idea of what was sold in the canteen. The canteen manager said the pastries and cakes were made by the same bakery that made them for the Royal Palace. Whether that was true or not, these pastries and cakes were delicious and he had a hard time keeping them in stock.

We had been in the schoolhouse for some time when four Romanian princesses came to talk to us. One of them was Princess Catherine Caradja, but I am not sure nor do I remember who the others

were. The auditorium was pretty-well filled, and these ladies gave the impression that they were not happy with the Germans. One of them told us of the horrible times they had with the Russians during World War I and they decided to try the Germans this time. They found the Germans to be no better. She said it was "Either the frying pan or the fire." These ladies couldn't express it openly, but I believe they wanted us to understand that their sentiments were with us.

I mentioned above that one of the princesses who came to talk to us was Princess Catherine whose mother had started an orphanage in Romania. When her mother died her grandmother took it over. In 1919, she felt that her grandmother was tired so she took over. Her orphanage estate was not far from Ploesti. In the low level raid of August 1943, one B-24 crashed on her estate. With the help of some of her orphans she was able to extricate one crew member who had been left for dead. A couple of German soldiers came up at that time and tried to take the badly burned American officer, but the Princess held on to him. She then took the prisoner to an orphanage hospital for treatment of his severe gasoline burns. Princess Catherine did what she could to help the American POW's of this low level raid of August 1943. She referred to them as "her boys" and visited the camp when she could. I believe the POW camp was at Timisul. Those of us who became POW's from the high-level raids of 1944 did not see the "Low Level POW's" almost until we were freed.

After hearing the Princess talk, we went about our ways trying to keep busy about something. Princess Catherine was one of those who insisted that we were prisoners of the Romanians and not the Germans. There had been some Romanians as well as some Germans who thought that we should be turned over to the Germans. Romanian Premier Antonescu was one of these and, worse than that, Antonescu's wife wanted American POW's to be taken out in the woods and shot. As it was we tried to keep busy (between the raids by the 15th Air Force and the R.A.F.) so we wouldn't have thing like that on our minds.

One would not guess the crazy things we did to keep our minds occupied. In the evenings, we preferred to have our lights out and our windows open. I will never forget one amusing night we recognized that there really was a distinct difference between the low level POW's of 1943 and us, the high level POW's of 1944. We realized that we had brought along with us some of the finest natural gas producing equipment available. This night we produced what might have been called operation "Blow Torch" or by today's standards "Operation Flame-Out." These "blue light" activities would take place at night during black-out and would light up the sky (room that is). In any case, I really don't think the R.A.F. could have spotted it. There was one flaw in the equipment. It had no anti-syphon device and one poor POW got singed. That closed down the operation for that night.

Toward what became the end of our stay as POW's, the Red Cross supplies finally came through. We were really glad to see them. Some of the things we received were shirts and pants, cigarettes (better than the nationals we had been smoking) and Woodbury soap. I think the Woodbury soap brought the fat Romanian Colonel out of his quarters for a rare visit. We hadn't seen much of him but when he smelled that soap he hung around begging anyone he could prevail upon to give him "just one bar." Aside from the soap, the Red Cross did bring us other things that we really welcomed.

On August 17, 1944, Colonel James A. Gunn, who only a short time before had assumed command of the 454th Bomb Group at Cerignola, Italy, was shot down on one of the Ploesti missions. John Porter and Jack Benett from the 739th Squadron were shot down on the same Ploesti mission. They were all held in a temporary Ploesti confinement facility then taken to an interrogation camp outside Bucharest and finally to the permanent POW camps. The officers arrived at the Schoolhouse POW camp about the 20th of August. The enlisted men were held in a camp on the opposite side of the city. Colonel Gunn found upon arriving at the Schoolhouse that he was the senior officer.

Somehow at sometime a radio had been acquired, but all the POW's didn't know about it. Each night it was brought out to listen to the BBC news broadcasts. The night of August 23, 1944, it was learned from a news broadcast that King Michael of Romania had announced that his Nation had capitulated to the Allies. This was really joyous news and you can bet it was not kept quiet. The Schoolhouse went wild. Actually, what I first heard was the Michael and his mother, Queen Helen had

invited Antonescuc, the Prime Minister, to the Royal Palace and had set a trap for him. When he came into the Royal Palace, they sprung the trap and took Antonescuc prisoner. There were all kinds of stories running around, but one thing we knew, they had overthrown Antonescuc, the Nazi Puppet.

The next morning, August 24, 1944, we were first assembled by a Romanian Army Colonel who advised us to remain in the prison camp until further notice. You can imagine how well these instructions were followed when the gates were opened and we were no longer restricted to the area. Soon after the Romanian Colonel left, Princess Catherine came to the Schoolhouse. She spoke to the officers and she was not as elated as one might think she should be at the news. She didn't like the Nazis but she feared the Russians. I have said over and over that I did not trust the Russians. In most reports, the Russians having started a drive down from the northeast were given credit for bringing about the armistice and liberating the American POW's. I always understood that the Romanians pushed the Nazis back toward the northwest. There was much ground fighting. The Romanian paratroopers were used along with other Romanian troops because in pulling back, the Germans had destroyed the Romanian planes on the ground. So the paratroopers had nothing in which to fly.

On the morning of August 24th, we heard the loud wailing of the air raid sirens. Shortly afterward, there was the bursting of bombs. The Germans kept up this indiscriminate bombing for about three days and nights. During one raid, Bob Ralston and I were outside the Schoolhouse talking to a Romanian girl who used to walk by the Schoolhouse and wave. We ran to the adpost (slit trench) in the Park. We had given the girl some chocolate. After the raid she took us to a bombed out building, and her mother cooked some eggs for us. They were the first eggs we had had for a long time. Realizing that the slit trench was no protection we went to the Schoolhouse basement for the next raid.

In the middle of Bucharest the Germans had made a mess of the Royal Palace and also had wrecked the Royal Shelter hoping to get King Michael. He wasn't there! He had gone to an unknown destination. Another of the German targets had been a large residential area. The residents had run to the slit trenches for safety. Many were killed when the slit trenches were blasted out of the ground. The buildings were hardly touched.

Realizing that the American and Allied Prisoners of War were in a dangerous position with the indiscriminate German bombing and the street fighting, Colonel Gunn worked to get the Romanians to agree to move the POW's to another camp a few miles outside of Bucharest.

After reaching an agreement on moving the POW's to a camp outside of Bucharest, Colonel Gunn tried to get a plane to fly to Italy to arrange for the evacuation of the POW's and prepare a plan for a strike against the Germans who were operating out of Banasea Airfield, a few miles north of Bucharest. Suggesting the strike against the Germans at Banasea helped Colonel Gunn persuade the Romanians to arrange a flight for him to fly to Italy.

Preparations were made for a Romanian pilot to fly Colonel Gunn out of Popesti Airdrome in an ancient Savoia Marchetti. Along with the Romanian pilot, there was a crew of two Romanian enlisted men. The enlisted men were wearing sidearms because apparently Colonel Gunn wasn't trusted. The Savoia Marchetti took off from Popesti Airdrome but returned after about 20 to 30 minutes. Supposedly, it had engine trouble.

When Colonel Gunn alighted from the plane at Popesti Airdrome he was met by a Romanian Captain named Constanti Cantacuzene, Commander of a fighter group and an excellent pilot. He was also a cousin of Princess Catherine Caradja. He offered to fly Colonel Gunn to Italy if he would ride in the belly of a Messerschmidt. Colonel Gunn agreed. Captain Cantacuzene spoke such excellent English that he and Colonel Gunn had no trouble communicating.

The radio equipment was removed from the belly of the Messerschmidt and American flags were painted on either side of the fuselage. Fearing that information on their flight would reach the wrong people, Captain Cantacuzene put out word that they would leave at dawn the next morning, August 28.

When the flags were completed - and almost dry - Captain Cantacuzene helped Colonel Gunn climb into the radio compartment as if to try it out. The opening to the compartment was rather small and when Colonel Gunn was inside Captain Cantacuzene slipped the cover plate over the opening,

fastened it, climbed into the cockpit and they took off to Italy that afternoon, August 27.

They landed at the San Giovanni Airstrip, home of the 454th and 455th Bomb Groups. The flight from Romania to Italy may have been uneventful, but we must not forget that Colonel Gunn was stuffed in the belly of that Messerschmidt without oxygen, with no way of seeing out, and no way of getting out in an emergency. We know the Lord was watching over them.

After the landed, Colonel Gunn and Captain Cantacuzene were given something to eat, and then hurried off to the 15th Air Force Headquarters at Bari, about an hour's drive. There plans were made for strikes against the Germans at Banasea Airdrome and for the evacuation of the prisoners of war.

The next day, the 99th Fighter Group made a strike against the Germans at Banasea Airdrome followed later by bombardment units of the 15th Air Force. They destroyed the Germans at Banasea.

Many stories circulated about the arrival of Colonel Gunn and Captain Cantacuzene in Italy. One was that Captain Cantacuzene was given a brand new P51 and returned to Bucharest. Colonel Gunn started to take off for Bari in the ME109 but was confused by the German instruments and ran off the runway at San Giovanni Airstrip. This really was one wild story.

Part of the plan for the evacuation of the prisoners involved Captain Cantacuzene. He flew a P51 fighter plane to Popesti Airdrome accompanied by two other P51's. Captain Cantacuzene landed at Popesti and signaled to the other two P51 pilots that it was still safe for the evacuation. Those two P51's climbed to a safe altitude and relayed the message on to Bari.

The first two B-17's with P51's flying as escort arrived. These B-17's brought in a liaison party which included medical officers, OSS, and others to prepare for moving the approximately 1,200 POW's.

Most of the POW's, including many from the Low Level Ploesti Raid of 1943, were in the camp outside of Bucharest and we were waiting for the flights of B-17's to come in and pick us up.

Though more of the POW's were from B-24 Squadrons than the B-17 Squadrons, I understood that B-17's with their tail wheel could cope with the rough runway of Popesti Airdrome better than the nose wheel of the B-24's. It didn't bother us because we just wanted to get out.

While we were waiting, I thought of the great job the Romanians had done in taking control. I always believed that they pushed the Germans out to the northwest and kept us out of the hands of the Russians whom I didn't trust anyway.

Our day for evacuation was 31 August 1944. We were taken by truck or bus to Popesti Airdrome to await our turn to board the B-17's as they came in. They landed, pulled up, cut the two outboard engines, and a group of 20 ran out and boarded. Each B-17 had been equipped with boards for seats in the bomb bays which accommodated 20 men. We had been divided into groups of 20 while we waited.

Many Romanian soldiers had come out to see us off and many had insignia or other items that they offered as souvenirs for trade. I discovered that I wasn't much of a "horse trader" and I don't remember what I wound up with.

Our turn came and we ran out to the B-17 that was taking our group of 20 to Bari. We had a beautiful trip and we thanked God for that. He was with us all the way.

When we landed in Bari, about the first thing we had to do was take off our old dirty clothes and get dusted or sprayed to get rid of those pesky little lice that we picked up in the prison camp. After the change of clothes and dusting for lice, Bob was taken to the hospital in Bari where they kept him overnight because of the injury to his eye.

The first night in Bari, we slept in tents and on cots with mosquito netting on a kind of frame around each cot. I had just gotten to sleep when there was an air raid alert. The siren woke me and I jumped off the cot and got myself thoroughly entangled in the mosquito netting. I wound up under the cot wrapped in the mosquito netting.

From Bari we were flown back to our groups and taken to our Squadron. The day after we got back, Froggie de Bordenave (my brother-in-law) who was the Navy Chaplain at Naples drove over to see me. He said, "I didn't know what to bring you, but the supply ship had just come in so I brought you a half crate of California oranges and a fifth of Seagrams VO!" That night we had a party. Harriette Vaden one of the Red Cross girls who served our group asked us to come in to her place. She lived on the

outskirts of Cerignola, not far from our Squadron. Froggie, Bob Ralston, John Porter, Joe McAllister, and I went to Harriette's. We had a lot of fun, much of it "catching up." Joe was one of the pilots in the 739th Squadron and not a POW, but he and Harriette, having been around the 739th Squadron while we were away, helped us in our "catching up." Froggie may not have been around the 739th but he had moved up from Palermo, Sicily to Naples while we were gone and he had a pretty good idea of what had been happening in the area during the past Spring and Summer. He wowed us all with his stories of playing poker with the Navy pilots and winning all their money. Joe McAllister, a good Texan, really couldn't believe it, but he thought so much of Froggie in that short time that he hitched a ride to Naples with him the next day.

I don't remember dates too well, but orders dated 7 September 1944 ordered us released from the 454th Bomb Group and directed us to report to the C.O. of Replacement Depot No 7, for trans-shipment via surface transportation to the United States.

Well we went to Replacement Depot No. 7 and Froggie was on the ball. He looked me up immediately and asked me to bring a couple of friends and come have dinner with him. I got Bob Ralston and John Porter and Froggie came down and picked us up. I wrote "came down" because Froggie, the Skipper of the Port, and Executive Officer lived in a villa overlooking Naples harbor.

That night we had a fancy three or four course dinner with a white table cloth and all. We may have had finger bowls too, but I don't remember them. After dinner, the seamen brought us liquor and set up a movie for us to watch. I don't remember the name of the movie but I do know that it didn't get to Richmond until two or three months later.

The movie was on two big reels so there had to be an intermission while the reels were changed. The Skipper said to Froggie, "Padre, don't you think we ought to have drinks around while the reels are being changed?" What a nice intermission that was! I will go on and say the evening was a real treat to these former POW's. On our way back to the Replacement Depot, Froggie drove us around Naples and pointed out the Naval Officers Club and Enlisted Men's Club. Froggie, amongst his other duties as Chaplain, was in charge of these clubs and had to use up any surplus money that was made. He would use all he could to make them pleasant then he would put them on free beer for about two hours every late afternoon.

We didn't spend much time in the Replacement Depot. We were put on one of those troop ships, the S.S. Athos, and headed for the United States. We landed at the New York Port of Debarkation, Fort Slocum. There, we had to get some new uniforms and I remember Bob Ralston and I got a lot of help from two nurses. The place that sold the uniforms couldn't fit them in time for us and a couple of nurses offered to fix them. You can be sure we said "yes". Well, Bob and I did take them, I think, to the Glen Island Casino that night. We had fun and Bob and I even sang "Mr. Moon" for the crowd. We were glad to be back in the good old USA.

When we left Fort Slocum, Bob was scheduled to go to the AAF Redistribution Station #1, Atlantic City, New Jersey, and I was to go to Redistribution Station #2, Miami Beach, Florida. Though we went to different redistribution stations, we have kept up with each other and still continue to do so.

EPILOGUE

As one of the Americans captured and imprisoned in Romania said of Princess Catherine Caradja, she was the "the best friend an American POW ever had." Princess Catherine used her influence to arrange for the downed Americans to be held in Romania rather than be sent to Germany. She was a frequent visitor to the POW camps in Timisul and Bucharest. After King Michael announced the capitulation of Romania, she not only wanted to help get the American POW's back to Italy, but she wanted to keep them out of the hands of the Russians as well as the Germans.

Princess Catherine continued to work with the foundation for orphans which her mother had built and she had taken over in 1919. She worked for them through the Communist (Red) invasion of 1944 and in the ensuing Red government until 1949 when the Communists took over and she lost

everything she had. She remained in Romania until 1952 when she escaped to the West.

In December of 1955, Princess Catherine was able to come to the United States. During the ensuing years she traveled to all 50 states trying to find "her boys"- the former prisoners of war in Romania. Through her encouragement, they formed The Association of Former Prisoners of War in Romania. The Association has been operating for several years and has a reunion annually. She traveled around the country by bus looking up former prisoners of war in Romania. She always attended the Association's meetings and always had a strong message: "Americans, cherish and protect your freedom. You who suffered its loss for a time should know and remember how precious it is, and how necessary it is to safeguard it." For 20 years, she went from town to town in this country speaking of freedom and the dangers to it. How fortunate we POW's were to have had someone like Princess Catherine trying to help us. I will never forget how lucky Ginny and I were in June 1983 to have Princess Catherine come to Richmond and spend a wonderful weekend with us.

In many respects it might seem that I was supposed to visit Romania. As I mentioned in my first letter to Mother and Father from the hospital in Giurgiu, my first cousin, John Skelton Williams, Jr., was Vice-Consul to Romania from 1921 to 1924.

After World War II, my brother Murat was sent to Romania as First Secretary of the Legation. He and his wife Joan were there from 1947 or 1948 until the Fall of 1951. Most of the time he was Charge d'Affaires.

There was one more connection, slight as it may be, involving indirectly another relative. Col. Henry Anderson of the law firm of Munford, Hunton, Williams and Anderson was appointed Chairman of the Red Cross Commission in Romania in 1917. The Williams in the firm was my Uncle Randolph Williams. While in Romania, Colonel Anderson was quite taken with Queen Marie and she with him but he returned to Richmond and to the firm in 1918.

NOTE:

After the overthrow of Communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu in late 1989, Princess Catherine was invited to return to Romania. A farewell dinner was held in her honor in San Antonio, Texas on May 18, 1991.

Her granddaughter Princess Brianna Caradja and daughter Princess Alexandra live in Paris. Her granddaughter Brianna flew into Texas and took her to Paris where Princess Catherine stayed with her daughter Princess Alexandra until she was strong enough to continue on to Bucharest.

In 1992 Princess Catherine was able to return to Bucharest after 40 years of exile and there she could celebrate her 100th birthday. She had an apartment at St. Catherine's Crib Orphanage in Bucharest. St. Catherine's Orphanage had been founded by her mother in 1877.

Princess Catherine Caradja died on May 26, 1993 in Bucharest, Romania at the age of 101 years. The following autobiographical sketch written by Princess Catherine Caradja

PRINCESS CATHERINE CARADJA

I was born in Romania in 1893; my mother - Princess Cantacuzene, my father - Prince Kretulesco. When I was three, he took me off to an orphanage in England under a false name. After my mother's death in 1906 he moved me to France under my real name. Helped by an aunt I escaped to Romania in 1910, and the courts gave me to my mother's family. In 1914 I wed Prince Caradja, then World War I started. When in the fall of 1916 half of our country fell to the Germans, I fled to the free side with 2 children, one year old and 10 days old. Six months later I started with a 30 bed hospital for typhus cases and later, myself caught the fever. In the fall of 1918 after the Armistice, I returned to Bucharest.

Through the bitter years of searching for me, my mother had built a Foundation for orphans. The motto: "A mother who lost her child, for children who lost their mother." After her death, her mother took it over. In 1919 after those war years, I found her tired and I took over. I built up the foundation and added a foster home section in 12 villages near our estate. In 1920 I had our third

daughter. In 1933 I lost a child of 17 after a short illness in Vienna. My eldest was killed, with her husband, in an earth-quake in 1940. My last child escaped to the West in 1948.

I worked with the Foundation through the Nazi occupation in 1940 and the bombing by the Allies of the oil refineries. My land was nearby. I had a plane crash there. I helped that crew and 100 other surviving flyers in their POW camps in 1943 and 1944, also the over 1000 others who fell then. The Foundation now held 3000 children. I worked for them through the Red Invasion, in the fall of 1944, and the ensuing Red Government till 1949, when all was taken over by the State Offices and I lost all that I still had.

With nothing now to hold me, I accepted my last daughter's offer to try to get me out. After several attempts, I escaped in early 1952. Then I gave over 160 talks in France about "Life Behind the Iron Curtain". Every summer in London I spoke on the BBC networks. I spent the winter of 1954 to 1955 in Algiers after an earth-quake, organizing some child relief for a friend, also giving talks in Algeria and Morocco, stressing there the persecution in all our Captive Nations of all religions, even the Moslem minorities.

At last I got leave to come here in December of 1955. Since then I have spoken in all 50 states and all of Canada and have seen 90 of my first POW's and about 700 of the other, later fallen ones.

For twenty years I went from town to town here, without any time off, speaking of freedom and the dangers to it. Now I travel only half time, January to March and July to September. I live in Kansas City the rest of the year, continuing to speak there.

The Freedom Award of the Order Lafayette was awarded to me in 1966, in 1977 I received the one from the Valley Forge Freedom Foundation.

I feel that the only way I can be of service to our Lost Countries, is to tell the Free World about the "Worth of Freedom", showing conditions in the Captive nations and so encouraging the still Free World to protect and defend that Precious Freedom.

(Signed) Catherine Caradja

Princess Catherine Caradja
Armour Home
8100 Wornell Road
Kansas City, Missouri
64114
(no date given)

GROUP MISSION #30, 23 APRIL 1944
AIRDROME AND AIRCRAFT FACTORY - BAD VOSLAU, AUSTRIA
Donald W. Jones (738)

I was on the mission of April 23 to Bad Voslau. Hugh West, our AC, was the alternate lead and when the lead plane had bomb-sight trouble, Capt. West and Lt. James Thorpe, our Bombardier, took over and they both received the DFC for what they did. When I got back to the states, the first paper I bought had a picture of the a/c factory destroyed at Bad Voslau. About all I remember of that mission was a black wall of flak, but all we had was a small hole in "Miss Maggie". The only mission we really had trouble on was a "milk, run"? to Turin in Italy. There were seven bursts of flak and that seventh one got us. The bombs had just left when we heard a big explosion. It went through the fuel tanks of #3 engine and also knocked out the electric motor for the hydraulic system. We feathered the prop to #3. Gas was pouring into the bomb-bay, so I turned off the fuel valve to that engine but, in reaching up to turn it off, I turned off #2 by mistake. When the pilots yelled at me, I saw right away that the fuel pressure to #2 was zero. They had pushed the throttle and turbo all the way on and when I turned the