

# LUDWIGSHAVEN

*By John DeLury (453rd)*

Ludwigshaven, July 31, 1944, the I.G. Farben Chemical Plant. This was our first PFF mission, and what a way to begin. We flew Division Deputy Lead with Capt. Clingan as Command Pilot. According to our briefing, the target would probably have to be bombed using PFF and the flak was expected to be intense. The formation looked good going into the target, and it certainly brought up the flak. The bombing turned out to be visual and the German flak batteries were extremely accurate.

As we approached the target, Appel, the pilotage-bombardier started calling the flak like the voice of doom: "Flak low and to the right – high and on course – on course and on altitude; as a matter of fact there is flak all over the --- place." We were hit hard just at 'bombs away'. The lead ship caught fire at the root of the right wing and as it started down slowly, the crew started to bail out.

We were hit badly ourselves. The waist got it the worst. Haerle, the right waist gunner was hit in the foot by some flak that went through the flak suit he was standing on and he was bleeding quite a bit. One ammunition box was hit and several 50-caliber shells were blown up. The left waist gunner, a substitute for Cohen, was burned a little bit and his pants were torn. Aldrich was barely missed by a piece of flak that came through the bomb bay and another piece went through MacNew's table, through a Gee book and lodged in the Gee box. I thought I was hit but it was only a nick in my parachute pack. Everyone seemed to have had a close call. The flak was intense and accurate.

We immediately started giving Haerle first aid. It was plenty rough. I wound a microphone cord around his leg and grabbed a first aid kit. Just as I got it open the ship lurched and spilled the kit all over, so we had to get another kit. We used this one to fix him up as best we could.

To make things worse, while the other gunner and I were on our knees helping Haerle, someone was screaming to turn our plane because the lead ship was directly under us, burning badly. As it turned out the lead ship went into a straight dive and we think everyone got out, although one chute burned.

We led the Division back without any further trouble, except that the ceiling was down to about 200 feet when we broke out. The ship went to the sub depot for repairs. There were about 60 holes in the ship, and three of the main fuel tanks had to be replaced. Later we found out that our bombs had been hit just at 'bombs away'.

This was our first combat mission with Appel and Warren. Haerle remained in the hospital for nearly two months, but his foot finally healed and he was scheduled to go home within the next couple of weeks, no more combat --at least for the time being. His place was taken by Dubois, otherwise known as "Frenchy". Cohen missed this mission – he had returned late from pass.