

# My "Favorite" Mission: To Ulm, Germany on 13 September 1944

BY FRANK W. FEDERICI (445TH)

This story requires the following preface: A former neighbor boy, Sam Ellis, received an assignment from his teacher wherein he was to contact a WW2 veteran and ask him a list of questions. Sam telephoned me and told me about his school assignment question: "Which one of your missions was *your favorite*, Mr. Federici?". I responded with, "Let me think, Sam, because of all of the years that have passed." Finally, I recalled that our crew had led the 2nd Air Division on a mission but I did not remember the target. I told Sam that it was my favorite because we were leading about 600 bombers. He shouted, "600 bombers!" I did not plan on writing this story, because I did not recall which mission was involved. Then I e-mailed my young 88-year-old pilot, Vincent Mazza, who checked his military file and reported back on the one and only mission where we flew as deputy lead and took over the lead when the lead ship had to abort over England. It was our 20th mission, to Ulm, Germany on 13 September 1944. So now I will tell the rest of the story, Sam.

We took off from our base in Tibenham, England, home of the 445th Bomb Group. Our crew would fly as deputy lead in the lead squadron off the right wing of the lead ship. The crew was as follows: James A. Williams (pilot), Vincent Mazza (copilot), John C. Christianson (nose turret navigator), Frank W. Federici (navigator), Leo J. Lewis (bombardier), Herbert A. Krieg (engineer), Carl E. Bally (radio operator), Edward W. Goodgion (waist gunner), Kenneth J. Brass (waist gunner), and Charles W. Bickett (tail gunner).

We circled over England until we were in formation. Shortly after we were in formation as deputy lead (on the right wing of the lead ship), we learned that the lead ship, which included a Brigadier General observer, had to abort (go back to base because of mechanical problems). Thus, we as deputy lead must take the lead position. Since it was our twentieth mission and our crew was an established lead crew, we felt that we could take this responsibility. I was only twenty years old but felt that it was not different than leading a squadron or a group or a wing. Apparently our commanding officers thought we could "cut it."

The briefed routes included a division assembly line (D.A.L.) for about 60-80 miles over the North Sea east of East Anglia, England. It was a thrilling experience for me as I hooted and shouted with pride (without pressing the interphone button). I have never told any of our crew members, because we all had the same attitude - we all were just doing the job we were trained to do, period.

Each wing and group had a specific target and would branch off the D.A.L. as briefed. We were briefed to hit a tank and truck factory: Klockner, Humbolt and Deutz. Our group was hit by flak on our way to the target, on a beautiful sunny day as we flew in an easterly direction with the beautiful Swiss Alps on our right wing to the south. Ulm was located in southern Germany. We were also hit by flak on the way back to base. We lost one bomber, according to 445th Bomb Group records. Our ship was not hit, so we called the mission a "milk run".

So this is what happened on my "favorite" mission, some 62 years ago.