P-38 had an attrition rate (whatever that is) of 25.1 percent of unit equipment compared to the P-51’s 17.8 percent. 8AF SS, 63.  

23. The significance of the oil targets was their rugged defenses and subsequent American bomber losses. The Fifteenth lost the greatest number of bombers against this target system (804 of 2,356 lost) and nearly its highest percentage of losses (3.11 percent). Only industrial targets claimed a greater percentage (3.12 percent). Against Ploesti, the Fifteenth lost 276 heavy bombers on twenty missions, 5.24 percent. More precisely, the Eighth dropped 31 percent of its bombs on industrial targets, 34 percent on transportation, 20.8 percent on tactical (plus 4.5 percent on V-weapon targets), and 5.9 percent on shipping and U-boat targets, leaving 3.8 percent on miscellaneous targets. The Fifteenth dropped respectively on the first four categories: 24.2, 51.6, 20.9, and 4.1. 8AF SS, 38, 39; 15AF SS, 2-7, 10; AAF Evaluation Board Report, vol. 6, “Ploesti”; “The Air Battle of Ploesti”; “Fifteenth Air Force Attacks on Ploesti.”  

24. The tonnage came to 260,000 tons on oil targets and factories, and 280,000 tons on land transportation in Germany. (The AAF strategic air forces dropped a total of 603,000 tons on land transportation). USSBS, Statistical Appendix to Over All Report (European War), February 1947, 1, 20, 49, 52, 53, 57; 8AF SS, 38, 39; 15AF SS, 2-4.6.  

25. 8AF SS, 40-44; 15AF SS, 2, 10.  

26. To be precise, the Eighth dropped 49.7 percent of its bombs with non visual methods, the Fifteenth, 18.5 percent. 8AF SS, 21; 15AF SS, 12.  

27. Ibid.  


Based on my research, I believe the actual accuracy was less than these figures.  

29. In4-5/10s cloud cover, half landed within 1 mile; in 6-7/10s conditions, half within 1.3 miles; and with 8-9/10s cover, half within 2 miles. Eighth Air Force Tactical Development, August 1942 May 1945, 72.  


31. Eighth Air Force Mission Fold-  

32. The Fifteenth’s fighters posted a claims-to-total-loss ratio of 1.7:1, while the Eighth’s ratio was 2.5:1. Although I do not know that the two units were using the same criteria, I believe the general trend of a lower claim ratio and higher loss ratio for the Fifteenth’s fighters is correct, even if not precisely what these numbers indicate. 8AF SS, 16; 15AF SS, 8, 12, 15.33. Mellor to author.  

The End

---

Remembering an Old Warrior

Letters to the Editor, Wall Street Journal

"Reprinted with permission of the Wall Street Journal © 1989 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All rights reserved."

Editor's Note!

These letters are included in this edition in support of the B-24 Liberator as a viable fighting machine. Readers are encouraged to add their remarks pro or con to this as perhaps the oldest controversy still lingering on from World War II. Was the B-24 better or worse than the B-17? Also comments on which air force was best, the 8th or 15th are solicited from members and readers.

Syosset, N.Y.

As a former flight leader in the 445th Bombardment Group of the Eighth Air Force in World War II, I should like to comment on both the March I advertisement of General Dynamics Corp. seeking contributions for restoration of a B-24 Liberator and the March 23 letter from Murray Grainger, whose description of the B-24's flight characteristics and mechanical deficiencies I believe not to be universally valid.

As a pilot in the same group as Jimmy Stewart (the actor), I completed 30 missions over Western Europe from England, pilot-}