

Blasting the Nazi fuel lines—A B-24 Liberator, on the historic Ploesti mission, sweeps in at roof-top height to bomb the Rumanian oil center.

Life and Death of an American Bomber

Here is a thrilling now-it-can-be-told story of the war. It is the story of an American bomber on the hazardous first flight over Ploesti. Written immediately after the crew returned from its mission, it has just been released by the censor.

CAIRO (By Wireless).

THE life of an American flier cannot be standardized in the more or less simplified terms of Infantryman GI Joe. For a certain part of the time he is sticking out his neck to a formidable degree and with a very definite percentage of risk. The rest of the time he is likely to be taking things easy in an atmosphere of considerable comfort as compared to the lot of his colleagues in the ground army. Perhaps in a sociological sense he is the reincarnation of the horse-borne medieval knight. This is the story of one group of American fliers and their plane—an average group manning an average bomber.

* * *

THE short, sweet life of Hadley's Harem began in December, 1942, when a four-engined, twin-tailed Liberator was bumped off a California assembly line and simultaneously a crew of ten youngsters, having completed individual training, met for the first time at an Arizona airfield. They threw a little beer party at a Tucson hotel in order to get acquainted.

This brief cycle ended almost exactly

Ten young airmen were launched on a great adventure — seven lived to tell the tale.

By C. L. SULZBERGER

eight months later when, battered and perforated, its nose shot off, its engines feathering streams of flame, its one small gremlin insigne eviscerated by flak, Hadley's Harem, bearing its cargo of dead and wounded, slumped heavily into the tranquil Aegean Sea: a swift career, born and died.

First Lieut. Gilbert Hadley, 22-year-old pilot from Arkansas City, Kan., who gave his name and life to the cumbersome aircraft, introduced his crew to his ship on March 8, 1943, at Topeka, Kan., when the bomber was flown in from the Salina dispersal base. The plane was a terrifyingly ordinary product of this mechanical age of destruction, distinguished only by a solitary gremlin carelessly painted on its side. The crew comprised a cross-section of American boys, fresh from the marbles and mumblety-peg stage, ranging between 19 and 23 years in age.

They were: Co-pilot, Flight Officer James Lindsay, Wichita Falls, Tex.; bombardier, Second Lieut. Leon Storms, White Plains, N. Y.; navigator, Second Lieut. Harold Tabacoff, Brooklyn, N. Y.; engi-

neer, Technical Sgt. Russell Page, Ryegate, Vt.; radioman, Technical Sgt. William Leonard, Dorchester, Mass.; assistant radioman, Staff Sgt. Leroy Newton, Monrovia, Calif.; assistant engineer, Staff Sgt. Pershing Waples, Forsyth, Mont.; tail gunner, Staff Sgt. Frank Nemeth, Bethlehem, Pa.; armorer gunner, Staff Sgt. Christopher Holweger, Middletown, Ohio.

Hadley's Harem, duly christened, was loaded with the crew's equipment and at Palm Beach, Fla., took off for overseas on March 26, adventure bound. In Georgetown, British Guiana, the Harem's front wheel gave way while landing in a rain-storm and the fuselage was skinned. The crew found another old wheel, which they mounted themselves, and took off again, but when they arrived at Trinidad they were ordered home for repairs.

ON May 26 Hadley's Harem hopped off again in fine shape and, traveling under sealed orders, arrived at Cairo on June 5. A fortnight was spent overhauling the ship and removing clothing racks from its interior. The crew experienced its first

contact with the lure of Cairo's wretched bazaars. On July 2 Hadley's Harem was assigned to the Thirty-fourth Bomber Squadron, United States Ninth Air Force, and arrived at its desert base.

DURING the next forty-eight hours the pilot, co-pilot, navigator, engineers and the radioman were taken out as passengers on bombing missions just to get their hands in. On July 4 of last year Hadley's Harem took off on her first sortie, with orders to bomb Vibo Valentia, in Italy.

The crew was full of beans. They sat up most of the night talking and listening to tales of combat flights. At 10:30 the following morning the Harem was over the target. There were very few enemy fighters and sparse flak. A pair of Macchi 202's came buzzing around, but they did not bother anyone very much. The gunners got a little practice and everyone was happy.

The Harem's first really interesting mission was against the Foggia chain of air bases in Italy, now serving as the main Allied offensive bombing base in the Mediterranean. Lieutenant Hadley was ordered to pound railroads and airfields. Holweger, Newton and the two waist gunners were each given three boxes of incendiaries to toss out at random. They started

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The story of ten young American airmen' who took part in the hazardous first attack on the Ploesti oil fields.

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chucking the four-pound fire bombs periodically when they got over the coast. They each saved a box for the target area, setting them up in the waist where they could give them a shove whenever the bombardier called "bombs away."

The Harem had to fly about for half an hour looking for the target through clouds and thick ack-ack, with a few Messerschmitt 109's humming around. By this time the Harem felt herself pretty well seasoned. She had six bullet holes, acquired over San Giovanni. The ground crew kept her neatly patched. Lieutenant Hadley always used to say, "You can't give those guys enough credit."

THE Harem's first mass raid was on Rome. Hadley, Lindsay, Tabacoff and Leonard reported for briefing at 7:30 one evening in the tin-roofed operations building. The rest of the crew sat in tents reading magazines and killing locusts. Suddenly Leonard walked in and let out a small war whoop, saying, "Well, we're going to Rome. It is a virgin target—never been bombed."

American bomber crews are eligible to be grounded and are frequently sent home after a specified number of hours on operational flights, so they like long assignments, which eat up time. The squadron was called together before the Rome raid and informed by its commander, "Any one who doesn't want to bomb Rome because of religious reasons can stay off and he will be respected for his principles." Somebody cracked, "Hell, we'd bomb New York for fifteen hours flying credit." Holweger and Leonard were Catholics, but they said they didn't mind bombing military targets, and, anyway, they thought they'd like to get a look at Vatican City. "It looked pretty nice," Holweger said later.

At 5:30 A. M. the Harem's crew arose and ate a big breakfast. Their plane got in line about 7 o'clock, hanging around for

about thirty minutes warming up. At 8:10 the Harem was taxied out and the rest of the bombers began to take off. Suddenly Hadley wheeled her around and back to the parking place.

The generator was out. The ground crew managed to get it fixed in ten minutes, so the Harem had plenty of time to roar down the runway and climb into the formation circling above.

It was a nice hot, cloudless day, but it is cold in any plane at 25,000 feet. Hadley's boys were all excited and a little bit on edge. Tabacoff saw some Lightnings and thought they were Messerschmitt 110's. He hollered into the intercom, "Looks like some Jerries." Hadley looked down and shouted, "For God's sake don't shoot. They're P-38's."

Hadley's Harem was supposed to hit the railway marshaling yards and an airfield. Lieutenant Storms put a train of bombs right into a hangar and walked it straight across the tracks. There weren't many fighters and they stayed pretty well out of reach. Nemeth got in a few bursts at a couple of Messerschmitts.

The first that the crew of the Harem heard about their biggest job, wherein disaster encompassed some of them and reached tantalizingly for others, was on July 29, when they were called over to the operations room for briefing after breakfast. "It's Ploesti, boys," some one said. "You know—Rumania—oil." Already, after the Rome raid, word had got around that the next big mission would be at low altitude. The boys knew what they were in for. The Liberator is a big bomber and a tough bomber but it is designed for altitude precision work.

THE first thing the men were briefed on was escape procedure in case they were forced down. Then that evening they listened to descriptions of the target, witnessed movies of it, and listened to explanations of just how important it was.

For two weeks the 344th Bomber Squadron had been practicing low-level flying and had been blasting a miniature city built in the desert with practice bombs and special low-level releases and sights. The dummy target to most of them just looked like ruined buildings and they did not know what it was. That became clear with movies made from miniature models, with targets marked by arrows.

Maj. Gen. [now Lieut. Gen.] Lewis H. Brereton and Brig. Gen. Uzal G. Ent told the fliers how important their mission was. They said Ploesti supplied 40 per cent of the Axis' oil. Said General Brereton, "If you knock it out the way you should you will probably shorten the war. If a land army had to attack Ploesti it would take a force larger than the Eighth Army and many months of fighting. If you do your job right it is worth it, even if you lose every plane. You should consider yourselves lucky to be on this mission. If it is a success it will be better than putting in six months of bombing on other targets."

NOW, with the Red Army edging forward toward the Rumanian oil wells and Allied bombers regularly pounding them, this raid seems to shrink in importance. Nevertheless, it ranked in difficulty with General Doolittle's Tokyo venture and among other things proved the difficulties of employing American heavy bombers on low-level jobs.

Back in the tents Holweger scratched his black hair and figured there was a good chance it wouldn't be a specially hot raid in terms of opposition. "If we can catch 'em by surprise," he told Page, "it might even be a baksheesh ride, without any flak or fighters." Page said, "I guess all targets are pretty much alike. You can't figure one is more dangerous than another, anyway. If you do you're lost."

"Yeh," said Leonard, "if your name's not in the little black book you'll be back."



Lieut. Gilbert Hadley.

On the whole, the boys had plenty of confidence. Colonel "Killer" Kane was leading them and he happened to be plenty popular with Hadley's Harem. Colonel Kane was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor later for his operation.

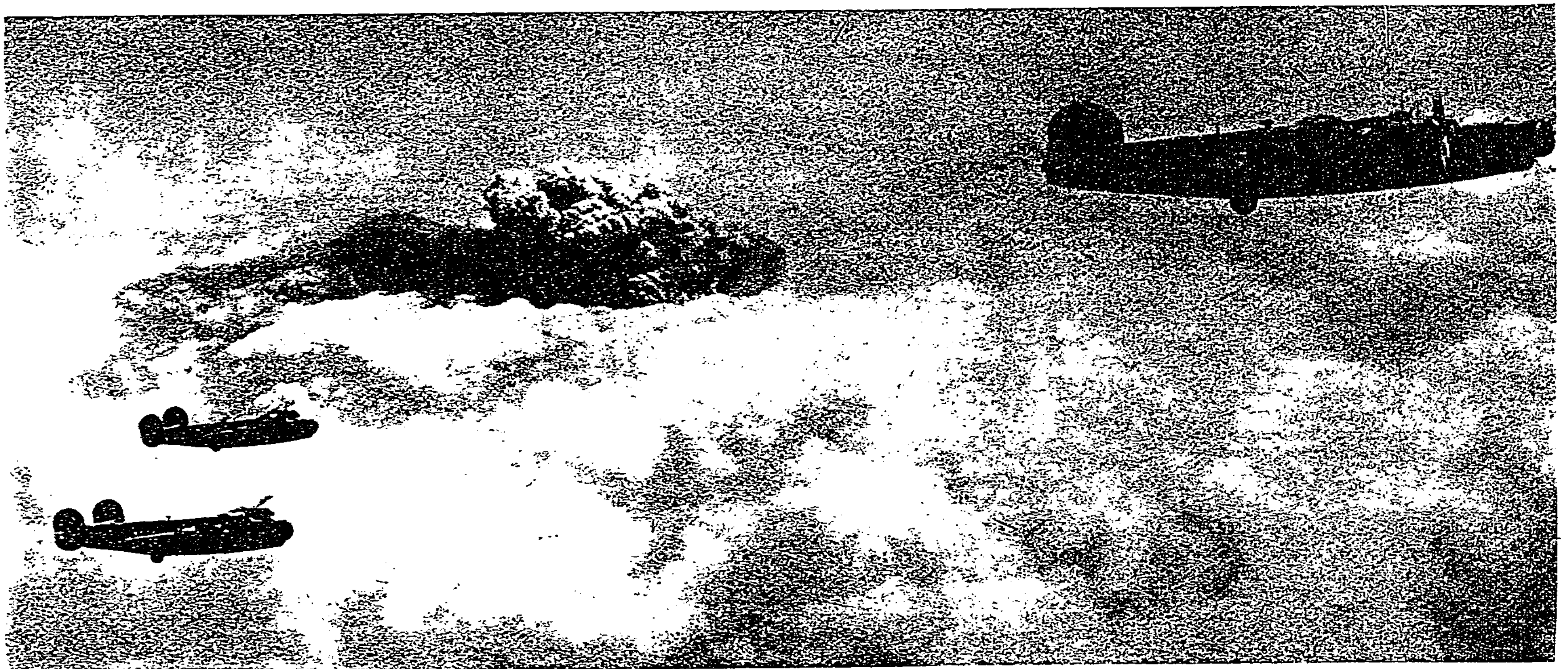
The next two days were spent in briefing sessions and checking and cleaning guns. Some crews received issues of Rumanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Yugoslav money in case of forced landings. Many had English gold sovereigns and ten American dollars apiece. They received carbines, revolvers and advice on Balkan women.

"Say, Colonel," drawled one heckler, "if we have to jump do you expect us to love or fight our way out."

At 4:45 A. M., Aug. 1, the Harem's crew arose and a half hour later breakfasted on fried eggs sunny side up, bacon, coffee, bread and apple butter. Page remarked, "it is darker than all hell." They all had to eat by flashlight.

That was the big morning. Everybody piled out without a second call. They were rarin' to go.

At 6 A. M. the (Continued on Page 42)



A 20,000-foot column of smoke rises above the clouds from the Ploesti refineries during a Liberator raid.

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crews assembled before the Operations Building and were taken to their planes in trucks. The sun had just begun to slip over the desert as Hadley's boys reached the Harem, heavily loaded, with two extra bomb-bay tanks, four boxes of incendiaries and six huge bombs.

AT 7:10 the Harem roared down the runway and took off, rising easily despite the load. She circled the field for nearly an hour making formation. Then, with radio silenced, she swept over the sea, green blue, calm, untroubled, placidly reflecting the bombers' shadows.

Around noon the first land hove in sight—a series of rocky hills above Corfu—and the Harem veered northeastward, flying still at about 8,000 feet through cumulous clouds drifting above the mountainous Balkan peninsula. The Harem's crew was sweating plenty for fear of hitting other planes in the tight, cloud-bound formation.

About an hour from the target the formation began to lose altitude precipitously over rolling farmlands. Forty-five minutes away two fighters showed up but did not appear anxious for a spat. Gradually the bombers leveled out at about 150 feet and plunged northward. Leonard kept peering about for the famous Blue Danube, but as they hummed across its disappointingly tedious gray-brown surface he muttered into the Harem's intercom, "Like that Kentucky bluegrass, it just ain't blue."

At 3:30 Sunday afternoon the formation neared the target. Ploesti is easy to recognize. It was already burning well from the pounding by earlier waves. On the outskirts of the target's perimeter an oil storage tank spouted forth torrents of heavy black smoke, pierced by orange flames. Lindsay's voice sounded in the earphones, "Bomb-bay doors open," and Tabacoff yelled, "One minute from target." Then all hell broke loose.

STILL roaring along at 150 feet the Harem zoomed over a bunch of trees and gathered herself for the bomb run as Lindsay shouted again, "We are here." Bill Leonard peered out and saw a huge timber pile burning. Flames appeared to lick up at the belly of the plane and to a contrapuntal accompaniment of smoke, eddying cinders and fragments a hail of flak exploded upward.

"It is just like a movie," Leonard mumbled to himself.

Amid an overwhelming fury of sensory confusion the plane roared on, when suddenly a terrific shock sent quivers through it. Tabacoff screamed in the intercom, "Bud Storms has been hit." Storms was a great pal of Tabacoff. A chunk of heavy flak had blown off the nose of the Harem and another had lodged in the bombardier's chest, killing him instantly. Tabacoff himself was badly wounded in the arm. "They got me too," he

shouted in the intercom, asking Hadley, "Can you send down someone with first aid?"

Leonard looked out and saw the No. 2 engine burning furiously. He tried to break in on Tabacoff's shouts, when Waples interrupted, "No. 2 is burning." Tabacoff again took over in a high-pitched voice, saying, "Hey, Hadley, I think Bud has been hit serious. I have been hit in the arm. Send someone down." Hadley sent Page.

Before descending into the nose, Page, a quiet blond cattle buyer, remembered that because of Storm's condition (which he did not yet know was death) the bombs had not yet been dropped. So he salvoed them, releasing them all simultaneously by using the emergency apparatus in the pilot's cockpit. As they lunged down into the target area the Harem bucked like a horse.

THE engineer then climbed into the bombardier's compartment, taking a first-aid kit along. Storms was dead. His whole chest was blown to ribbons. Page said later, "I never want to see a mess like that again." Then he approached Tabacoff, who was faint and dizzy with shock and blood loss and was leaning against his control. He pulled off the navigator's shirt and banded his arm. Tabacoff looked pretty bad and Page told him he had better go up on the flight deck. There was nothing to be done in the nose. The wind was shrieking in through a big hole in front the size of a manhole cover.

Page telephoned Hadley, "Do you want me to stay down here and operate the guns if any fighters show up?" But the pilot replied, "No, you had better get Tabacoff comfortable and come back up and see what you can do here."

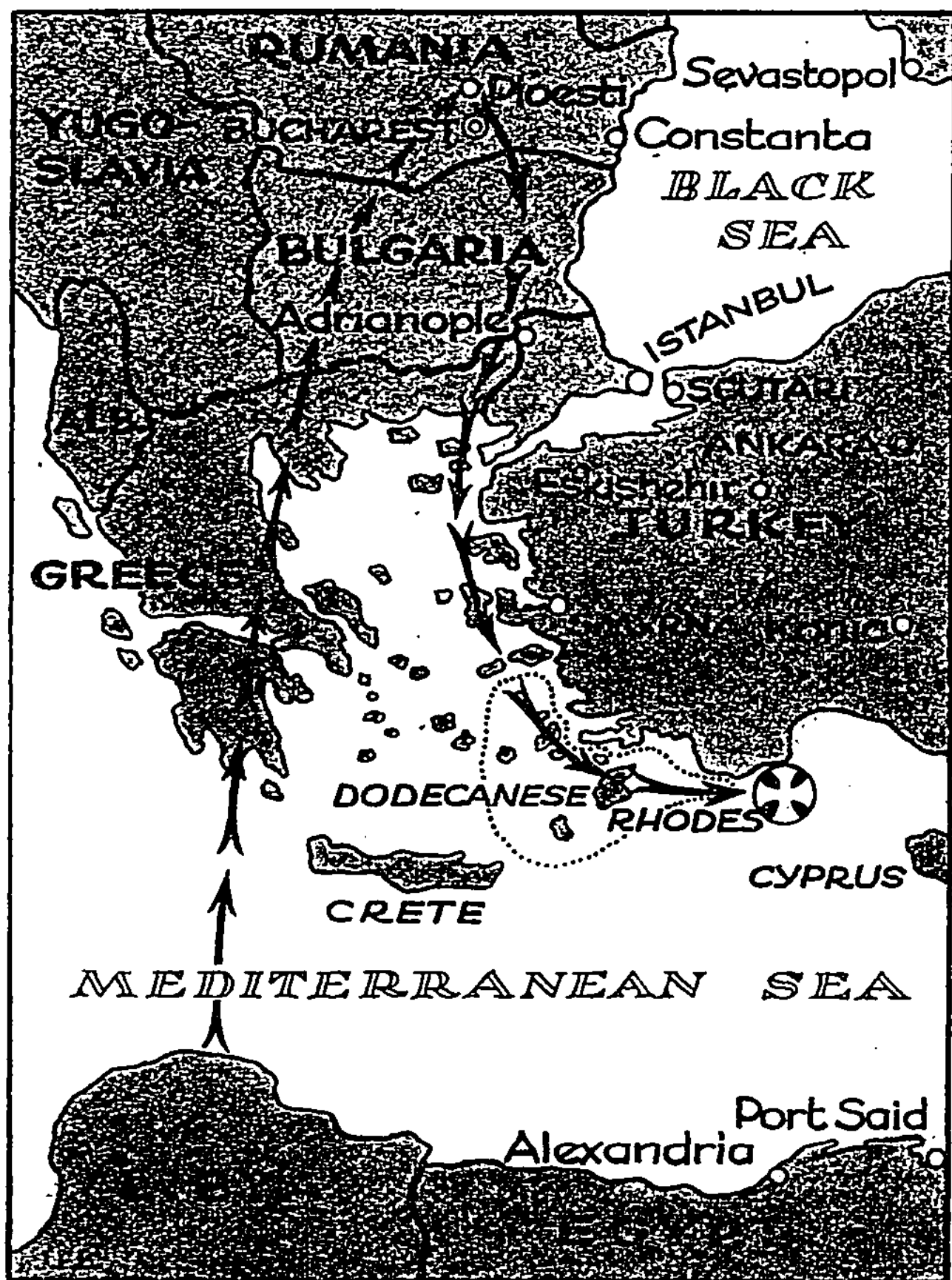
Hadley managed to get the No. 2 engine feathered so that the flames would not spread. It had been hit in the oil tank by flak. Oil smoked on the hot engine. By turning it off the fire was successfully stopped.

At this point—a matter of seconds—the Harem lurched and began to nose down heavily. Both Hadley and Lindsay pulled back hard on their sticks. The crew, anxiously peering out at the up-rushing ground, figured the Harem was done for. Page felt it for sure. Leonard began muttering quick prayers.

By a miracle the two pilots righted the ship and tensely began to look about for fighters. The Harem had special guns in its nose and they were strafing hard. All around—a few feet below the huge bomber—a Fourth of July fireworks party was going on. Although the heavy bombs were delayed action, the incendiaries spread seething waves of flame. Big and small flak exploded upward, while the wind whistled strangely through the plane's gaping nose.

While the bomb-bay doors were still open the Harem was again hit hard and the flak lifted the floor right up into a nasty V-shape toward the rear. The shock

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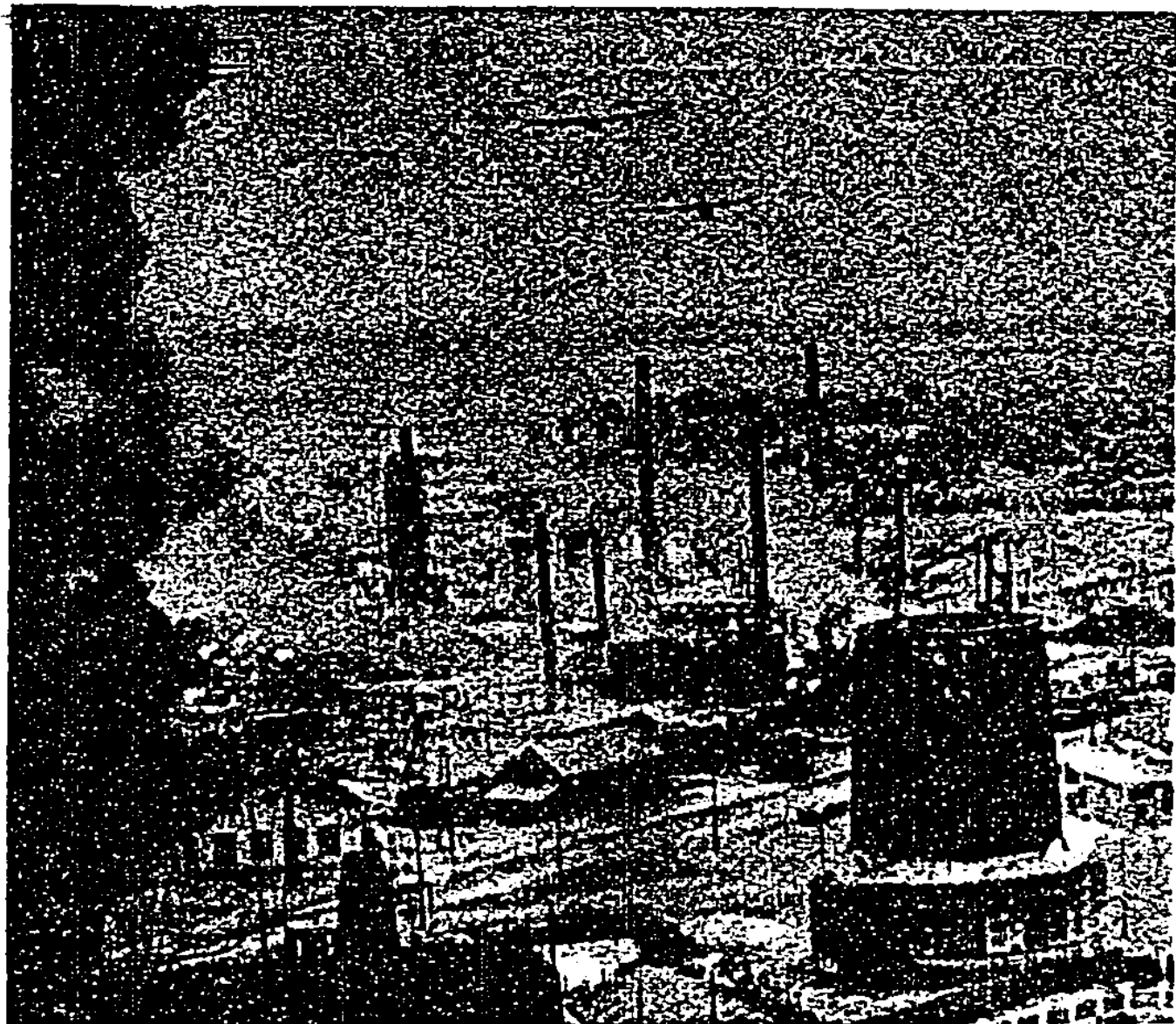


The probable route of Hadley's Harem.

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American airmen score direct hits on the Ploesti targets.

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of the explosion knocked Newton, who was manning the right waist gun, on his ear. He jumped up, quickly grabbing his guns. Just then three birds flew directly overhead and, still dazed by the blow, Newton thought they were enemy pursuit planes and blasted away at them.

The odor of gunpowder and smoke from the flak batteries filtered through the Harem as she skimmed just over the treetops. At one point she plunged right into a billowing smoke cloud through absolute darkness. Unperturbed, Holweger and Newton heaved out the rest of their incendiaries through the waist windows beside their guns.

As the ship emerged from the smoke prison Holweger saw two huge Liberators settle on the ground to the left with bomb-bay tanks flaming. Another climbed slowly, painfully, tortuously to about 3,500 feet, burning from wingtip to wingtip and suddenly, in a timeless flash, it disappeared from sight and existence. Blackie Holweger kept thinking about that later.

"I guess they were trying to get up and bail out," he said. "For a split second I saw that. It was the most horrible thing I had ever seen. It is stamped on my mind."

By this time the Harem was staggering along at twenty-five feet altitude beyond the target area. Her hydraulic system was shot out and there was nothing the engineers could do about it. Gasoline was leaking badly from the No. 1 engine into the bomb-bay, so Page transferred the fuel from the dead No. 2 engine to No. 1.

THE Harem was still ahead of the formation as the other bombers moved around her for protection. The lead ship was officered by Colonel Kane, who commanded the group. Although Kane's plane was missing in No. 4 engine it again assumed the head of the limping formation. There were five ships in it, only two of which had all four motors going. They had to circle about and about in

order to keep with the cripples.

The weary way-worn quintet turned slowly and headed southward over Bulgaria, painfully trying to get altitude in order to master the mountain ranges which they knew lay ahead. As they began the tedious climb they passed a Sunday excursion train; all the passengers were leaning out of the windows waving happily. A rich vista of pleasant lands unfolded, with farmers passively looking up and lifting their hands in friendly salute. Chickens scurried off for safety in tiny vortices of dust, and suddenly a young girl in an embroidered blouse burst out of a house running like fury.

PAGE asked Tabacoff, who was back on the job despite his arm, whether any mountains were ahead. The navigator requested him to bring up the maps. They figured they would have to climb at least 6,000 feet in order to negotiate the ranges. Everybody wondered how the cripples would manage. They did. The formation slowly mounted staying together, but because of limited power they could clear the peaks but arduously through the scrambled passes and valleys over the Rhodope Massif and down again across Thrace to the Aegean Sea.

Just as the Harem came out over the water No. 3 engine went out after losing all its oil. It was not getting any power and began smoking dangerously, so Page feathered it. The ship was then at about 5,000 feet and Hadley ordered all hands to be ready thenceforth to bail out. Page scrambled back to his tail, warning the gunners not to smoke, as fumes were leaking all around.

The Harem had only two functioning engines and was mushing along at about 125 miles an hour. The two full-powered bombers in the formation had swung in and out in order to stay with the limpers. Then the supercharger on No. 4 engine began to burn close to the motor itself. It burned with a terrific blue-white flame.

Hadley kept coaxing his plane

along in the ever remoter hope of reaching Cyprus. When she was some twenty miles off the Turkish coast No. 1 engine began rapidly to lose its oil. The gauge dropped down to zero. This was around 8:15 P. M. and it was getting hazy and dark.

Hadley turned to the co-pilot and asked, "What do you think we'd better do?" Lindsay replied, "I guess we'd better try to make land. Both No. 1 and No. 4 will be out shortly." Hadley swung in to the east.

As the Harem struggled forward toward the coast Hadley asked the crew over the intercom, "Do you want to bail out or try and stick with the ship?" All the boys said, "Let's stick with her."

THE Harem was losing altitude very fast now. Everybody took off his shoes. They knew they weren't going to make it. The bomber was already two miles behind the rest of the formation, which was headed steadily south.

When they were about three-quarters of a mile off Turkey Lindsay asked Page to read the air speed, but Hadley interrupted: "No. The co-pilot will read it." The engineer would have had to lean forward, gripping the backs of the flying seats, and in case of a crash would have been instantly killed. A plane hits water even harder than land. When the Harem was only a few feet above the rolling sea Page opened the top of the escape hatch and braced himself against the armor plate behind the pilot waiting for the crash. Then both of the remaining engines sputtered out together. There was a terrific noise and Hadley's Harem nosed right in so that just the trailing edge of the wing stuck out of the Aegean.

The shock was paralyzing. Several of the crew were knocked cold. Page, braced against the armor plate back of Hadley's seat, bounced backward and forward like a spring. Because of the tremendous flak holes in the nose the Harem filled instantly with water. The escape hatch slammed shut and the crew was trapped.

AS they swam, groping about the waterlogged coffin, Hadley and Lindsay struggled out of their safety straps. Page, entirely under water, suddenly thought of a thousand confused things—mostly his wife. He kept saying to himself in his mind: "My God, am I going to die this way?" He tried to burst open the escape hatch but it was firmly jammed. Hadley and Lindsay, half blind with salt water, tried and failed.

Page felt his way slowly to the top of the gun blister and tried to break through the flexinglass, but couldn't. Behind in the nose he saw the pilot and co-pilot flaying the water desperately. Then semiconsciously he discovered a gleam of dull light to his right and burst out. It was the section where the tail had broken off.

Leonard, Holweger and Waples slipped through the V-shaped hole in the floor cut by the exploding

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flak. Hadley and Lindsay never got out. They drowned slowly, caught in a maze of wreckage as Hadley's Harem began to lurch awkwardly toward the bottom.

WHEN they next knew where they were Holweger, Tabacoff and Page found themselves swimming with lifebelts on. Leonard got sucked in toward the wing but shook himself away.

It was rapidly getting dark. In a few minutes the plane sank completely. Newton, who had no lifebelt, came drifting by astraddle an oxygen bottle which had broken loose from the ship. Leonard called to Blackie Holweger asking him to give a hand because the radioman had suffered serious cuts, bruises and contusions in the crash and his clothes were dragging him down.

Holweger pulled him along. Waples had been hanging on to a wing because he had no lifebelt, having given it to Tabacoff whose arm was wounded. He floundered off and came in to the shore with Page on the same lifebelt. Newton drifted along with them clinging to the metal bottle and made it all right despite a compound fracture of the leg.

Holweger, Leonard and Tabacoff hit the rocky beach at approximately the same time. Tabacoff couldn't pull himself up, so Leonard hauled him ashore.

The two of them, staggering with fatigue and shock, looked up; they saw fifteen ragged peasants armed with ancient long rifles staring sternly at them.

"Jeez," said Blackie, "it looks just like those revolutionary movies."

As Holweger and Leonard reached down to help Tabacoff they again found the peasants menacingly pointing their guns at them. The three lads were still in a foot and a half of water which was lapping the rocks. Two of them picked up Tabacoff and dragged him ashore, but the peasants who they surmised were a form of Home Guard motioned to them to lie down on their faces.

THE seven survivors were ashore. Tabacoff had a big chunk of flak in his arm and back, and a leg hurt in the crash. Newton had a compound fracture of the ankle. Nemeth had a painful deep gash in the kneecap and torn ligaments. Waples had a broken leg and hurt back. Holweger had a black eye, bruises, cuts and battered ribs. Leonard was cut all over. Page was bruised and cut. Storms, Lindsay and Hadley were dead in the plane.

The suspicious peasants made all the survivors kneel who were able to and searched them, taking all bulky possessions, such as flashlights, which appeared dangerous to them. Then they put a cigarette in each mouth, talking friendly enough in their own strange language. One of them went inland for wood and started a fire. One helped Page and Holweger to move the navigator nearer the flame and then stood

guarding his oxygen bottle fearing it might be a bomb. Nemeth and Tabacoff lay together. The tail gunner was bleeding badly.

After a little while some uniformed Turkish soldiers arrived. The fliers kept trying to tell them they were Americans, but nobody understood. Finally Blackie, darkest and blackest-haired of the seven, rolled up his sleeve and pointing to his arm repeated constantly, "Me white, me white." Page roared with laughter.

The soldiers searched them again and brought up a couple of oxcarts for the wounded. Holweger and Leonard carried Waples painfully to one wagon. Then they picked up Tabacoff, but he fainted from pain half way there and they laid him down. When they tried to lift Nemeth he passed out also.

SO the Turks drove the oxen to the fire and the Americans lay down beside the flames. They spent the night there. Every half hour Holweger and Leonard brought up more driftwood in order to keep it going while a cold wind blew up. All night long the wounded groaned when they were conscious. There was no medical aid. The fire burned them on one side, the wind froze them on the other. Page kept trying to explain without success that they wanted to see the United States consul or at least a doctor.

Just before the sun climbed out of the mountains and the able-bodied survivors built up the fire more strongly they thought they saw a boat in the distance, perhaps looking for them; but nothing happened. Newton, who is only 19, was in bad shape by now, but despite the terrible pain he never winced. Holweger, Page and Leonard moved him into the shade, but the suffering expressed on his mute face as they carried him was so terrible they decided to leave the others in the sun. It was too awful.

At 11 o'clock one of the guards spotted a plane heading their way. It was an English Wellington about ten miles offshore. Page and Leonard figured it was searching for them and started furiously waving their Mae Wests. The pilot spotted them and flew in to the shore. Just as the corporal returned to the fire-side bearing some bread and cheese the Wellington roared overhead dropping a tin can.

One of the Turks brought over the can and Leonard pulled out a message which said, "Are you the Americans who bailed out of the Liberator last night? If so write yes on the beach and number of survivors. Good luck." Page wrote, "Yes" and "Seven" with rocks, but the English Wimpy couldn't read it and dropped another can.

THIS time the message said, "Stand in line if you are the Americans who bailed out and raise your hands over your head.

Holweger, Page and Leonard lined up the three wounded in the sand and rocks and stood by them. They didn't have the heart

to move Newton again, so they got the corporal to stand with them and all raised their hands. The Wellington circled back, signaling, "If there are any more survivors raise hands." They didn't. Then the Wellington dropped a message, "Are you being treated well? Do you need assistance? If so raise your hands over your heads. We are flying back to the base and have your position."

They raised their hands and the Wellington crew waved their arms from the cockpit window. The plane returned in twenty minutes and discharged a red flare. This scared the Turkish corporal, who insisted on loading the wounded aboard oxcarts. The Wellington continued to circle while shooting off flares, while the Turks became progressively more nervous. The Americans didn't know what they wanted.

Just then a boat was sighted over the horizon. Page and Leonard dawdled behind, delaying the corporal in efforts to hurry them off as the boat cut in toward the beach like a bat out of hell. When it was about three miles away the corporal forced them to get behind the bushes with the guard.

About half a mile offshore, when it was clearly identifiable as an RAF air and sea rescue launch from Cyprus, it dropped anchor, putting off a small boat which came ashore with three men. They were British. One spoke Turkish. He explained to the corporal that they wished only to give assistance.

THE corporal said it would be all right, and the little procession traveled four miles inland to a village, where the wounded were lifted out of the carts and laid on mattresses provided by peasant women. The Englishmen now produced morphine and first-aid equipment and one of them, aided by the local doctor, dressed the wounds and administered anesthetic.

After the village authorities had produced fried eggs and beans—the first food the Americans had had since 5 o'clock the previous morning—the flight lieutenant commanding the rescue party, all wearing their blue uniforms, explained they wished to return and to take the Americans along. The village authorities refused, although later they permitted the rescue party to depart.

The four wounded men then were loaded on a mattress-covered truck and transported with the others to where the leading official spoke some English. He shook hands all around. He said, "We hear it was a big raid. Congratulations. It was a good job. Your enemies are also ours."

Thus ends the story of Hadley's Harem. Its epilogue has not been written. Maybe it is best to put it in Bill Leonard's words:

"We who survived were pretty damn lucky. We are going to be better church members from now on. If you've led a good, clean life and Lady Luck's on your shoulder, you're okay. That's just about the way it is."