



Insignia of the 389th Bomb Group.

EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR ADAM MAKOS' NEW BOOL EXAMINES OPERATION TIDAL WAVE
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A SINGLE B-24D CREW

BY ADAM MAKOS

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is an exciting excerpt from bestselling author Adam Makos' new book *Tidal Wave*. The book deals with one of the USAAF's most daring raids — the attack against the heavily-defended Ploesti oil refineries in Romania that was called Operation *Tidal Wave*. Coming in at extremely low-level, the Liberators faced a formidable enemy and casualties were high. In this excerpt, we find Lt. Robert O'Reilly and his crew trying to keep their badly damaged Liberator "CHATTANOOGA CHOO CHOO" in the air after running a gauntlet of enemy anti-aircraft fire.

They ran from Red Target like men who'd cheated death.

(This 1 August 1943 mission of Operation *Tidal Wave* had sent the Liberators and their crews into a hell-storm of enemy fire.)

Below, the blur of sunlit farmland raced past, just 100 feet beneath the wings of Consolidated B-24D USAAF 42-40782 "CHATTANOOGA CHOO CHOO" (567th Bomb Squadron, 389th Bomb Group — the "Sky Scorpions") as pilot Bob O'Reilly followed the Prahova

River out of the valley with the rest of their flight. With every passing mile, co-pilot Ernie Poulson felt relief. Each second carried them farther away from Steaua Română.

Wolf Wagon pulled up off their left wing, a welcome companion for the ride home. All that remained was for the wingmen to reform on Rodenberg, a couple hundred yards ahead. Ernie felt amazed that everyone in their flight made it. In the cockpit of *Wolf Wagon*, Matson's co-pilot glanced over at

"CHATTANOOGA CHOO CHOO" and grinned. It felt like they were making a getaway from a heist.

As they raced from the valley, the pair of bombers soared past wooden oil derricks scattered across the fields, each drawing black gold from the ground. Whatever was left of their precious oil industry, the Romanians could have it. Ernie felt a surge of elation. They'd done it. The 389th's daring attack had paid off, and he'd managed to keep his vow from Benghazi: "If only one plane comes

In this well-detailed painting by Gareth Hector, the B-24Ds are seen exiting the target area. However, the number one engine on "CHATTANOOGA CHOO CHOO" has been hit and is beginning to burn. For Lt. O'Reilly and his crew, the situation would only get worse. There was nowhere to go but down. Years later, in similar situations, famed WWII pilot Bob Hoover would advise "fly it all the way to the crash" and that is exactly what O'Reilly would do.