

Dear Bud:

The copy of an old newspaper clipping, dated March 1945, surfaced during the past month. I sent a copy to each member of my old crew with their Christmas Greetings. The newspaper article was a product of some Public Relations work-up to sell war bonds. Thought you might like a copy. The ditching occurred February 5, 1945, about halfway down the middle of the Adriatic on a return trip from a bomb run on Regensburg. We were flying a B-24J No. 34.

The earlier reference to being "forced down" in the article occurred, December 11, 1944, returning from a mission over Vienna. We were flying a B-24H, "01'77", and after 7 members of the crew bailed out, the pilot, co-pilot, and radio operator crashed the plane in a valley a few miles from Benkovac, Yugoslavia, and were picked up by Tito's Partisans.

CALVIN R. TEEL 825th Squadron



Sidney Sergeant Safe After Second Plane Crash

Staff Sergeant Calvin R. Teel, 20 of Sidney, was forced down for the second time recently when his plane crash-landed in the icy waters of the Adriatic sea after bombing raid on Regensburg, Germany, his base headquarters reports.

Efficiency of rescue facilities and training is revealed in the crew's reaction to imminent "ditching" and the quick recovery of all the men by air-sea rescue service.

The sergeant, a radio operator and aerial gunner on a B-24 Liberator operating with the 15th airforce in Italy, had been forced down in Yugoslavia a few weeks before. Although the section was in Allied hands, it took the crew five days to get back. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Vance Teel, Sidney.

The plane was part of a large formation on the Regensburg raid and reached the target without incident despite a faulty airspeed indicator. Just as they were dropping their bombs on the objective a heavy burst of anti-aircraft fire struck one of the plane's wings, badly damaging the intricate fuel system.

All the gasoline began pouring into the tank for No. 2 engine. Everything went smoothly for a while until the big bomber was far out over the Adriatic

sea on the return trip. Then two engines, unable to get fuel, died.

The pilot could do nothing but nose the ship down in a steep glide to maintain speed and call the crew over the Interphone.

"When the plane began its sharp descent toward the water, we all knew the trouble was serious," Sergeant Teel remembered. "We had been 'sweating out' the trip back to base, but then we realized we wouldn't get there for a while."

With two other gunners, Teel hurriedly began loosening all emergency equipment which would be needed when they hit the water and then braced himself for the impact of the big plane against the sea.

"Everything went black for the next few seconds. I must have hit my head against the side of the plane when we crashed. The flood of cold water around my legs brought me back to my senses. I guess, because I jumped up on the command deck and followed the ball gunner out of the upper escape hatch.

"From there we made our way out to the right wing and dropped into a life raft which we had hung out the waist window just before we crashed."

Sergeant Teel and his companion maneuvered the dinghy around to reach several crew members who were lashing about in the water, trying to get away from the rapidly sinking plane.

They rowed around for about three hours, mostly to keep warm, before an air-sea rescue launch arrived to pick them up. Taken aboard the boat, they were rubbed down, given dry clothing, wrapped in blankets, and presented with steaming hot cups of malted milk. It was the first fresh milk any of the men had tasted since leaving America.

All were treated for exposure in a British hospital on the Italian shore, and stayed there all night.

"Lying down on the comfortable bed there, I realized how lucky we all were," stated Sergeant Teel. "A remark one of the fellows made while we were watching the plane sink, kept running through my mind. 'All ten of us are here,' he had said. Believe me, it was a wonderful phrase."

Sergeant Teel was graduated from Sidney high school in 1941 and attended Illinois State Normal university for a brief time. He has one brother, Corporal Gerald Teel, who is serving with an army combat medical unit.

Dear Bud:

Please keep the "Toretta Flyer" flying! The No. 10 issue had pictures of Jim English, a bombardier of the 766th. I was co-pilot on the crew he

finished missions with, along with Stan Hutchison, pilot, and Ted Bennett, navigator.

I also notice that Elias Moses is a new member. He was pilot of the crew I went over with but was shot down the week after we got there. He is listed with 765th but probably wasn't there long enough to remember it was the 766th! Keep up the good work, it is much appreciated.

TOM KEENEY 766th Squadron

Dear Bud:

I thought you might be interested in what happened to the 461st B.G. after VE day in Europe. I will try to list the events as they occurred:

1. At the time I was Squadron Bombardier of the 767th B.S.

2. Front line infantry troops, with high time overseas, were shipped to the 461st B.G.; then after a week they were flown to North Africa for flight to the U.S.

3. At the same time, the B-24's were modified with wooden racks so that they would hold insulated packaged food. The mission was to fly the food to Army Air Force P.O.W. camps and drop it at low altitude (500 ft.) right inside the camps. There were several (2 or 3) missions.

4. The aircraft ground maintenance personnel were sent to the China-Burma-India theater to assist in the build-up of B-29 groups.

5. The ground and flight personnel were sent via Africa back to the U.S.

6. Only a cadre outfit was maintained of personnel in each Squadron and Group. (I was one)

7. The cadre units were for final recordkeeping and packing of all necessary ground equipment and supplies for shipment to the U.S. (TAT) - to accompany troops.

8. All the requirements being accomplished by June 1945, the 461st B.G. cadre unit was ordered back to the U.S. We spent two weeks in Naples awaiting shipment on the U.S.S. America to Camp Patrick Henry (Newport News, VA.).

9. We were given 30 days leave at home, and orders to return to Sioux Falls AAF for reassignment.

10. It was there in September 1945 that I received the enclosed memorandum. Also, as the war had ended in Japan, personnel were being sent to the base closest to their home and were discharged from the service. I went to Portland, Oregon in October 1945 to be discharged.

I hope this memorandum will shed some light on the events of the 461st B.G. at the end of the war. I have never known when the 461st B.G. was officially deactivated.

Keep up the good work.

D.R. PERKINS 767th Squadron