



ADOLPH MARCUS, 824TH SQ. SHOWS HOW HIS PARACHUTE HARNESS STOPPED A GERMAN 20MM SHELL, SAVING HIS LIFE. (ROBERT A. HARRISON PHOTO 825TH SQ.)

Dear Bud:

Am writing to you in regards to the P.S. in your letter to me where you write that you found a photo of me, showing how my parachute harness stopped a 20mm shell. Consider it a PR story. I do not want any innuendoes from my fellow fliers, concerning the fact that a parachute harness can stop a 20mm shell. I don't think that is possible. So here is the true story, which I set out on the tables in the last two reunions. You were so busy, you and Bea, that you never noticed them. They consisted of my emergency kit, my dog tags, a four leaf clover and the remains of the 20mm shell.

On December 17, 1944, my crew and I flew "Old No. 15, The Ramp Rooster" in the 824th Bomb Squadron, to the Odertal oil refineries, in Germany. (Incidentally, Congressman McGovern was also a pilot on that raid)* Our late Pilot, Lt. Kime and a fellow member of our organization, Dick Brown, flew old "Ramp Rooster" that day. We were hit, just before we reached the target, by about 75 ME 109s. We were very busy keeping those Messerschmitts away from us, before we dropped our load of bombs on the target. The flak that day and the aggressiveness of the ME 109s was increased so that our formation was decimated.

But we accounted for quite a few enemy planes downed, so that our tail gunner (who is in an old age home now) was given credit for 2 planes and received the silver star. He is John

O' Neill. Chuck Ranck, George Davis, Robert Hughes, Arnold Reiff, and myself were credited with each accounting for about one and a half ME 109s. We were each, including our navigator, and fellow member, George Bouras and Bombardier Dave Nickerson, awarded the DFC. The majority of the crew were wounded in a very minor way, by flak and 20mm shell that found their way into and through our ship.

But to get back to the reason for this letter. In the midst of that "Battle of the Bulge" in the sky over Germany, a 20mm shell found its way through the skin of the ship, narrowly missed my pilot's leg, narrowly missed my navigator's head, passed through two sets of doors behind me, through one part of my parachute harness, between my arm and my body, through my left breast pocket, in which I had my emergency kit, dog tags, and four leaf clover, and a Jewish star on a necklace, after which it hit my control column, and blew it to smithereens. There I was in my nose turret firing at ME 109 in front of us, when I suddenly notice nothing in my hands. I could not maneuver my turret nor fire my guns any longer. Everything was gone.

Anyway, to make a long story short, how Lt. Kime and Lt. Brown brought back that sieve of a "Ramp Rooster" to base again, I'll never know, but they did, and it was then we discovered how really badly we were damaged. The "Ramp Rooster" could never fly again. It went out in a history of glory. You could look through those countless holes and see daylight out the other side. This ship had been Lt. Nance's ship until we took it over. Lt. Nance and his crew, which included John Hensel and Eugene La Pierre, all members of our organization, flew many a mission, but hardly had a scratch on it!

There was a hole through my emergency kit, in which I had a water bag, chocolate, matches, compass, quinine, etc. Government Issue. The water bag which, of course, was folded, was full of holes, the compass an top of a dry container of matches was cracked, the gum, chocolate, etc. were



RAMP ROOSTER. PHOTO TAKEN PRIOR TO MISSION DESCRIBED IN THIS LETTER. JOE HEBERT PHOTO 826TH SQUADRON.



RAMP ROOSTER OVER THE ALPS OUTBOUND ON A MISSION. NOTE THE MISSION TALLY (ROW OF PAINTED BOMBS) IS DIFFERENT THAN THAT SHOWN IN HEBERT'S PHOTO. KING BEACH JR. 827TH SQ. PHOTO

all cut in pieces. There was a hole in my flying heated jacket and one in my pocket, where the kit was. The harness could not be used if the occasion arose. The dog tags were rolled up from the intense heat of the shell.

I didn't know all this until we arrived back at the base, because our electricity in the nose, our oxygen and my turret were hit and we, Lt. Bouras and myself had to hook up in the pilot's compartment. We were lucky that day, but then, in retrospect, we were lucky on all the other rough missions. After all, we are here to tell the story. Some of our fellow fliers, starting in training in Savannah, Georgia, never again saw the light of day! Poor boys!

I cry inside of me, when I think of those poor boys including those at Normandy, and the second raid at Ploesti, low level. We had a party compared to what those kids went through.

Hope this long letter did not bore you. But that is the true story. Robert Ripley, and the PR story and picture, wrote it up wrong and I did not know this, until I left the service, but by then, I did not know who to contact to set the record straight. Anyway, it mattered no longer. It was a one shot deal to Ripley and the Air Force PR men, and was soon forgotten.

Even my crew, after the heat of battle, pushed aside the whole incident, and went on with the business at hand, which was more missions. We were just kids, and all the killing and dying, starting from our training in the States, were part and parcel of the war.

Today, when I look back at all these incidents, even the Normandy invasion and Ploesti, I shudder and realize how lucky we were. And all this is why I go to our reunions; To visit once again with those boys of yesterday. You and Bea work very hard to make all this possible for me. I find it very important, and on top of my priorities, to