

WHAT'S UP DOC, THE CONTINUATION OF THE STORY

By M/SGT HAROLD C. JACOBS, 825 SQUADRON

Referring to the story on "What's Up Doc" by one of its flight crew that appeared in Issue #11 of the Torretta Flyer, I wish to tell the maintenance story.

I started out with the 825 Squadron in Harvard Nebraska and ended up with the Green Project in North Africa after the 484th BG and the 825 Sq broke up when the war in Europe ended.

A recent tape I made for Bombardier Isaac Smoke of Porter's crew giving details of what went on in the outfit after they were shot down over Vienna, has through channels been made a part of Training Activities at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

Ship #34 was my airplane, and it was the airplane that won the Bronze Star for me. She had a record of 55 continuous missions, 2 fighters to its credit and was headed for greater glory. Maintenance was performed throughout the night under the most primitive conditions, so that it would always be ready the next morning for a mission.

The morning of December 10, 1944, a new crew was flying #34. As the ship took off it was reported that the engines were on fire and engines were feathered and fuel shut off. All this happened very quickly during the takeoff. In reality what was reported as fire from the waist window was only torching from a rich mixture and only appeared to be on fire. As a result of the feathering and unfeathering of the engines and manipulating the fuel selector valves the running engines were starved of fuel. As a result the plane lost power and crash landed in the field south of the runway. Had the crew been aware that on occasion a rich mixture can cause a torching effect, and had they leaned out the mixture during climb out, the accident would not have happened.

(See Editors note following the story)

The plane was carrying Booby Trap Bombs. It lay for three days before we went to examine it.

The left landing gear was down and locked. The right landing gear strut and all was sheared off. The nose wheel crumpled into the fuselage on impact.

After the time had expired for the booby trap bombs to go off we entered the ship. The arming wires were still in place making the bombs quite safe. The ordnance crew under Sgt. Matranga removed the bombs as shown in the accompanying photograph

We inspected the engines for fire damage and found none. The inside of the waist gate showed deposits of carbon due to the richness of the mixture.

On impact the windshield was partially torn away enabling the pilot and co-pilot to merely step out of their seats walking out on the top of the fuselage and then jumping down to the ground. The fuselage never split apart as the photos show.

No #34 saw service earlier in France when part of the 825th was at Avignon hauling supplies of fuel, 50 Cal. ammo and 500 lb bombs for General Patton's army. These supplies were lifted to Lyon and later North to Dijon as the Germans moved out.

As a crew chief on ships #34 and #31 I had the good feeling of sending many aircrews back to the states when they completed their tour of duty. This was a wonderful feeling. However when all of the ships had returned to the revetments after a mission and yours was empty that was a sadness that only someone who has had this experience can understand. Many times a crew chief cried when his ship did not return.

Stud Hoss (see photo elsewhere by John Grimm) was crewed by M/Sgt Leonard Suiter. Some of your flight crews might remember how you fought to get just one mission on this ship. I believe it was the only original ship in our squadron to survive the war and return home. I understand also there was an effort to scrap it but enough pilots thwarted that idea. With its old camouflage paint it stuck out in a formation of newer aircraft.

On page 14 of Torretta Flyer No 11, reader comment requested. Ship #41 that crashed was not flown by Crew # 41 or Porters crew. Crew 41 had gone down previously on a raid to Vienna.

Crew numbers and ship numbers had nothing in common. As I recall M/Sgt. Lepley was crew chief of #41.

Enjoyed a reunion with Isaac Smoke, bombardier, and John Chaffe Jr. radio operator on Porter's crew that was shot down over Vienna. I had often wondered what happened to the ship Big Dick on that day and after almost 41 years I found out.

It was at Lyon where I viewed the atrocities of Klaus Barbie, the butcher of Lyon. In one hangar where I went looking for souvenirs we found row upon row of dead women and children massacred by the Germans. The Germans upon capturing the airfield had rosters of French Jews, the addresses taken from the men who worked at the airfield. They went to the homes dragging back the women and children to the field where they were lined up at the edges of bomb craters, to be machine gunned and pushed into the craters then covered up. As they were dug up the French laid them upon the hangar floor for identification.

I was crew chief of the following:

"BIG DICK" #31. Porter's crew, lost Vienna June 26, 1944

"WHAT'S UP DOC" #34. Crashed end of runway

"BONA VENTURE" #31. Shot up, went to Russia, confiscated

"SNUFFIES PUBING MISSION" #31. Shot up, went to Russia, Yugoslavia.

I would like to hear from anyone who knows of any other original B-24, besides "STUD HOSS" that survived the war and returned to the States.

THE END

