



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A GEOGRAPHIC JOURNEY

By Bill Hogan, 827 Sq

I am not for nostalgia usually, But Fred Roessler's story in the Fall 86 edition of the Torretta Flyer prompted me to add some recollections of my own. I was one of Maj. Haldeman's crew. In May of 1944 we ran out of luck during the bombing of Weiner Neustadt, Austria. Heavy flak and Me-210's both hit us in that order.

HARVARD, NEBRASKA

Altimeter check: flying so low down a railroad track that the top of the embankment was higher than the aircraft. Cross Country Flying: A squadron B-24E called the "Gutless Wonder" because of its reluctance to gain proper altitude. Our very own brand new B-24 H. Remove the cap from the center of the control wheel hoping for a girl's address, but reading instead, "Now you let all of the gremlins out". Ground crews abandon us to leave for overseas with the same sparse advice, "Never, no never tow an airplane with a cleat-track vehicle". Our smallest crew member driving the largest semi trailer on the base so we can gas up. Civilian personnel waving good-bye and good luck as we buzz the base in farewell.

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Oh! well, we didn't need all that anti-ice stuff, parachute kits with a folding machete, and mini shot-guns.

MIAMI, FLORIDA

Look at all those funny looking B-24's with the ball turrets in the nose! Come on guys these are Navy, "Privateers."

TRINIDAD

Sleeping on a dirt floor as a variety of insects hum, chirp, and chatter outside, we hope it was outside.

SOUTH AMERICA

It takes forever to fly across the mouth of the Amazon river at low altitude. From a higher altitude the dense jungle looks like a damp, weedy, thick green lawn, "filled with all kinds of horrible things." Keep it flying.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

How far did the ATC say? 14 hours! Would you believe that we are running out of fuel at 13 and a half hours? Ditching a shoulder high wing aircraft with paper thin bomb bay doors can give you a sinking feeling. Shall we jettison the spider monkey we picked up in Natal, or the second engineer? Hold it there is the west coast of the, "dark continent now."

DAKAR

First time landing on steel mats. Thought the wheels had come off. French barracks with port hole type windows. Natives selling knives made from empty 55 gallon drums. Never heard of rust -proofing.

MARRAKESH

Airport men's room with footprints

embossed in the tile floor on either side of a tiled pit. Steady now! Standing guard at night in the pitch black, no night was ever darker. Returning from guard duty with one of those 1/2 candlepower right-angled G I flashlights. Sense anothers presence in the darkness. Heart drops into your shoe, then lift the beam upward. "Cigarette Joe?" asks a very tall French Senegalese perimeter guard. Wish I had a carton under my arm, but don't smoke. He understands though.

DEJEDIA

Narrow dirt taxi strips. No maintenance stands. Have to climb up and walk on the aircraft. Tail stands over a wide ditch when parked. Monkey goes to ape heaven. Area contains rifle pits and loose ammo as hold-overs from the previous Luftwaffe residents. Shake out your shoes before putting them on in case a scorpion or worse has decided to relocate the night before. Railroad crossing sign with a neat missile hole through the upright. Gasoline pouring out of the vents due to daytime heat, but we need blankets at night. Destroyed German tank setting on an embankment next to the road to Tunis. Keep an eye on the natives and anything lying loose.

TUNIS

An authentic belly dancer and the white walled U.S.O. building. See various other aircraft types at an adjacent field. Obsolete French Medium bombers with twin tails, basket weave Wimpy Wellington bombers whose counter rotating props