



Place : Torretta Italy, a crushed gravel hardstand for Ship #81 "Knock out". A flight crew from the 827 squadron dressing prior to a mission. Year 1944

before I jumped. One of the four came out that way, and I thought at the time it was Hickey, but I found out later it was Shell, the radio operator, but he was dead when he hit the ground. One of his legs was shot off and as far as we could figure, he had bled to death. The other chutes were Hogan, the tail gunner, Walsh, the nose gunner, and myself.

I lost all contact with the balance of the crew until about six weeks later. I had been taken to a hospital in Graz, Austria, and while there, an English POW who had been on a farm in the vicinity was admitted to the hospital. He came into the American ward and said he had found a part of a B-24 in his travels and gave us the number and it was our plane. He had located it on a map about 100 miles North East of Graz. I don't recall the name of the town, but as soon as I can get a map, I'll send you the name. I won't hold this letter up for it. I asked him questions about it and he said he had not seen it crash, but only saw the results. He said there were seven graves near it and five of them had names and two were unidentified. Only two of the names could be written down before his guards chased him away, but these two names were Hickey's and the Major's.

In my mind I feel certain that both of them were killed by the fighters and never got out, or tried to.

I have never seen so much suffering and pain and violent death since that day. I am probably crude in my description, but Doris said she would rather have the facts if the story was coming to her, so I am telling you exactly what I know and pulling no punches. Please forgive me.

And that is all I know, and I know if the Major is dead, that he died a hero's death. It is small consolation to know that

those of us who are alive, owe our lives to him and his ability to fly. I say, if he is dead, because I did not see him myself, and I am only taking the Englishman's word, which I have no reason to doubt.

My advise to you is not to give up. Anything can happen, and prayers can do an awful lot. Whether he is in this world or another, your prayers and faith can do him plenty of good. I don't want to give you any false hopes, the only possible way they could get his name is from his dog tags, and they could be found any place. He could be in the underground, waiting to get free. At least we can hope so.

My chances of seeing you are pretty slim for now because they estimate I have about six more months in the hospital, but after that I will do my best to visit the coast. I hope by that time you have better news than I am able to give you.

I know this letter is unsatisfactory, but under the circumstances it is the best I can do. I know you will have questions to ask so be sure to write to me and I'll do the best I can to answer them. Write to me at Doris's address and if I am at a new hospital, she will forward them.

To say I am sorry is entirely useless and inadequate, but empty words will never express what I felt about the whole thing. The Major was my pilot, my CO, and my friend. You can't loose all that and brush it off. I have lost one of the most important things in my life.

If I can be of any help, in any way, at any time, please let me know and I assure you, I will do all in my power to make it up to the family of the man who saved my life, part of what I owe.

So long for now, and remember keep praying.

That lucky guy,

Joe MacNamara

Notes: Lois Haldeman, wife of Major Don Haldeman (now Lois Locke), and Darlene Haldeman, daughter of Major Don Haldeman, (Now Mrs. M Darlene Doppee) are members of the Association. Her son Victor, is applying for admission to the Air Force Academy. His congressman has made the appointment. All attended the 1987 reunion in Colorado Springs. A copy of the original handwritten letter was given to the Association with permission to reprint it given by the Haldeman family. William (Bill) L Hogan, the crew's tail gunner is a member of the Association. See his letter in the Letters to the Editor section of Flyer #14, Page 16. Joe MacNamara, the crew Bombardier, is deceased.