

Good Luck Charms

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WANTED ONE LOST BASEBALL CAP

WHEN ONE OF THE CREW, A PHILADELPHIA ATHLETICS FAN, DECIDED TO ASK CONNIE MACK FOR BASEBALL CAPS, A NEW IDEA IN GOOD LUCK CHARMS WAS BORN.

With the 15th Air Force in Italy 1944

(Copied from a Press Release issued in 1944-
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BG)

Wanted one baseball cap, and please hurry, Connie Mack, because it's very important to a Liberator crew who are doing their best to cripple Nazi manufacturing and communications throughout Europe.

With 21 Missions to their credit, the crew has miraculously come back every time without a man wounded and only minor damage to their plane. Maybe it's pure luck or maybe just the breaks of the game, but the crew is sure that it is the blue caps with the white letter A on the front, sent to them by Connie Mack and his Philadelphia Athletics baseball club, while they were still training in the States. The nose gunner lost his during a fracas at Linz, Austria and with the missions not getting any easier, he'd feel better if he could get another cap.

At first it just was a good trick to get some flashy caps, and one of the boys, a Athletic fan from way back, insisted that they write Connie Mack. But during training at Tucson, Arizona, the crew realized that they had a better talisman than any rabbit's foot. It was a training flight and the pilot gave the gunners permission to stay in the sack that day after a big celebration the night before. The flight was routine until the B-24 came in for a landing. It was

the field when another ship signalled an emergency and also headed in. A warning from the control tower came too late and the crippled ship plowed into the other, cutting it in two, directly behind the wing. None of the officers in the fore part of the ship were injured, but if the gunners had been flying there surely would have been casualties.

In July, the crew joined a veteran combat group commanded by Col Frederick E Glantzberg, Fresno, California, and every day since then has added to their string of luck. On July 25, came the mission to bomb the Herman Goering tank works at Linz, Austria. As they started the bomb run the whole Luftwaffe, spearheaded by Goering's crack Yellow Nose squadron, hit the group. The escorting P-38's were high to avoid the flak and the Germans came in from below doing most of the damage before the escort tangled with them. Less than half the group returned to the base and the boys with the caps were the only ones of their squadron to make it. Of course, they

gave the pilot full credit for jumping into a vacant place in the formation ahead as their own flight went down in flames all around, but they were wearing their caps. Their liberator was unscratched.

Every mission has been a minor league Linz. As the borders of Naziland shrink, the flak becomes more concentrated and the fighters more reckless. On two successive days, August 22 and 23, the group hit Markersdorf airfield and the Lobau underground storage tanks, both targets near Linz, the scene of their first encounter with the Luftwaffe. Every Liberator that came back was scarred by flak and fighters, the only close one for the boys with the caps being a hit on the nose turret by a stray bullet at Lobau, which came in one side and went out the other,

smashing the plexiglass and missing the gunner by inches. The nose gunner is the boy who had his cap blown off his head and out the window after the Linz scrape. At the time a couple of the boys wanted to jump after it and land via parachute, but the slipstream carried it up and away beyond reach.

