



Robert Altman photo 484th BG

### Libports' Deliver the Goods Supply Hungry TAF with Bullets, Bombs

(reprinted from the Stars and Stripes)

ADVANCED ALLIED HEADQUARTERS, Oct 26, 1944 Napoleon's often quoted military axiom, "a soldier marches on his stomach" still goes today say the Air Force Quartermasters, and now they have revealed "how it was done" in the case of the Tactical Air Force the 7th Army miles ahead of its normal supply lines in the early days of the Southern France invasion.

What the Tactical Air Force was "hungry" for was aviation fuel, bombs, and ammunition so they could maintain air superiority.

They began to supply by air. This isn't new but the use of Liberators as transport was new. On September 10, 1944 the first "Libports" stripped of turrets, and turret guns and loaded with supplies took off from their home fields of Castelluccia and Torretta in Southern Italy \*(Note 1). Landing eleven hours later \*(Note 2) at the Lyon airfield. Off came the bullets, bombs, and fuel. Portable pumps were rigged to the Liberator fuel tanks and the precious fuel pumped into empty fuel drums, just enough being left to enable the Libs to make the return trip.

All in all, between September 10, and October 2, 1944, the 15th AAF Liberators of a wing commanded by Col. William L Lee, \*(Note 3) Weatherford, Texas flew 704 transport sorties without escort carrying 847,015 gallons of high octane fuel, 1,276,030 rounds of ammunition, and 802 pounds of bombs. as well as oil, empty drums, grease, and bomb fin crates.

tie on bottom tail fin).

\* Note 2 The flight time seems to be in error. It would be approximately correct for total round trip time.

\* Note 3 Later was promoted to Brigadier General.

### Bob O Billings Receives Soldiers Medal

(see Front cover photo)  
(reprinted from Stars and Stripes)

At the risk of his own life, an Albia (Iowa) man recently prevented injury and possibly death, to personnel of his organization (827 Squadron, 484th Bomb Group) and saved a B-24 Liberator.

In recognition of his heroic efforts, Sgt Bob O Billings was recently awarded the Soldiers Medal for, "performance of an act of heroism involving risk of life."

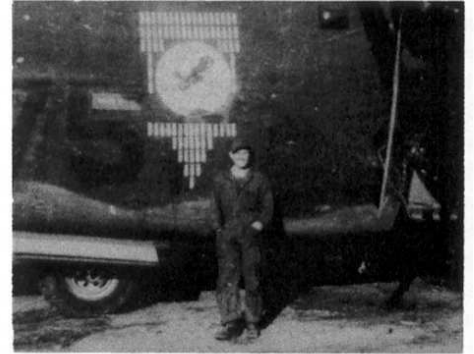
A few weeks ago Sgt Billings was watching planes of his squadron return from a mission. He noticed a nearby plane turn off the hard surface of the revetment. As the aircraft did so, one of the propellers struck a filled gasoline drum near the parking area. The gasoline splashed on the side of the ship and instantly burst into flames. Realizing that the plane might explode at any minute, the crew ran for safety.

Sgt Billings, knowing what an explosion could do, immediately ran for the ship. He made his way through the flames and into the cockpit, cut the switches and applied the brakes. He then grabbed a fire extinguisher and played it on the flames. In the meantime, fire fighting equipment arrived

\* Note 1 This was the 49th Wing comprised of the 451st BG (red ball on bottom tail fin), 461st BG (Red dash on bottom of tail fin, & the 484th BG (red bow

and now that the propellers had stopped turning, the firemen were able to get close to the plane. After a few minutes the flames were extinguished.

In the words of the citation, " The lives of many men in the vicinity were saved because of the gallant act. Sgt Billings by his unselfish devotion to duty and unflinching courage has reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America."



Generator Joe showing its bombing missions just above the insignia (Bob O Billings photo 827 Sq)

When Bob was asked why he didn't run like the rest, he answered, "Well after being with a ship for almost a year, you get to like it. In other words you feel like a mother to it. That ship went through too much to blow up right here on the ground."

Since then the aircraft (#75 Generator Joe) has flown 15 more missions over Hitler's Fortress Europe and its crew has destroyed three enemy fighters.

War weary after over 100 combat missions it was converted to R & R and cargo aircraft.



Generator Joe 75 After being converted to a squadron supply ship (Richard Moon photo 827 Sq) Hastings, FL