

Dear Bud:

I am enclosing an Escape and Evasion report, along with a diary report written by crew member Ralph N Christensen, of the mission of December 11, 1944. Cpl Edward Yurochko ASN 33767134 KIA on the mission is buried in the St Gospa Catholic Cemetery near Benkovac, Yugoslavia. He was awarded the Purple Heart and and Air

Medal posthumously.

Sincerely
Calvin R Teel 825 Sq

**ESCAPE
STATEMENT
December 15, 1944**

On December 11, 1944 the crew of Reuben J Kaiser was on a mission to Vienna. On the way to the target, engines No 1 & 3 were running rough and had to be put on automatic rich. The IP was reached and owing to too sharp a turn being made the formation got split up. After regrouping the formation went on the alternate target, Graz, which was bombed successfully.

On the return to base Kaiser's ship remained with the formation for an hour, when owing to a fuel shortage they left formation to take the shortest route home.

Finding that they had not sufficient fuel to reach the Italian mainland, the pilot headed for the Isle of Vis. Over Yugoslavia the no 3 engine started cutting out and the fuel pressure fluctuated. At 11,000 feet all four engines cut out over the Benkovac area (44 03N 15 36 E) owing to lack of fuel.

Lt Kaiser saw what appeared to be a piece of smooth white terrain, so circled around to land. At 3,500 feet he was able to see that the ground was not level and so ordered the crew to bail out. Seven bailed out, but as the radio operator left his chute in the waist, and had no time to fetch it. Lt Kaiser and co-pilot Chester L Jones stayed with him and the plane to land it.



Crew of Reuben J Kaiser 825 squadron. Front Row from left: Charles F Elsesser-nose gunner, Pope-ball gunner (who replaced Yurochko), Ralph N Christensen-upper turret gunner, Calvin R Teel -radio operator, and Charles J Shanklin-engineer. Back row from left: Albino Frigo-tail gunner, Charles E Laster Jr-bombardier Reuben J Kaiser-pilot, Chester L Jones-co/pilot, and Lane S McKone-navigator. Note that the crew is wearing new clothing that was issued after returning to the squadron from Yugoslavia. (Ralph N Christensen photo)

The hydraulic system was out. Lt Kaiser made a good belly landing and none on board were injured. The plane landed 2 miles east of Benkovac and was wrecked.

After destroying secret equipment, Lt Kaiser, F/O Chester L Jones, and Calvin Teel left the plane and were at once contacted by Partisans, who took them to Benkovac. The rest of the crew, (Lane S McKone, Charles E Laster Jr, Charles F Elsesser, Ralph N Christensen, Albino Frigo, and Charles J Shanklin) that bailed out, landed in an area of about two square miles, five miles East of Benkovac. They were never in the hands of the enemy.

All were picked up in small groups by Partisans and were joined with the rest of the crew at Partisan Headquarters in Benkovac.

One member of the crew (Cpl Yurochko) who bailed out, landed in a pit and was killed instantly by hitting his head on the side.

At the Partisan's headquarters the crew was well treated. Their personal effects and baggage was brought from the plane.

After spending the night in the house of the Mayor of Benkovac, where they were well treated and cared for, all attended the funeral of Cpl Yurochko at St Gospa

church in town. The Partisans gave Cpl Yurochko a funeral with full military honors. A service by two Catholic Priests was given for him and he was interred in the Catholic Cemetery, one mile east of Benkovac, and the grave was marked.

On the afternoon of December 12, 1944 the crew was taken in a bus to Zara (44 06N 15 15 E) (a three hour journey). The road narrow and hard, as well as a temporary bridge, was crossed without difficulty.

The party embarked at once on a British Cruiser where they spent the night of December 13, 1944, and on the following morning were transferred to a British

destroyer which landed them at Bari Harbor.

The crew were all well treated on both ships, in spite of crowded conditions on the Destroyer which was carrying 38 extra personnel, many of them escaped British POW's.

J G K Kennedy
Capt. IS 9
Interrogator

**Diary Report
By Ralph N Christensen**

Monday December 11, 1944. Briefed for a mission to Vienna, Austria at 4 AM. Flew ship #77 borrowed from the 827 squadron. This plane had just been repaired after a crash landing on the Isle of Vis. Missed the target at Vienna passing to the right because of overcast, but saw lots of flak. The lead ship ordered us to bomb the 5th Alternate, Graz, Austria marshalling yards. Saw flak in four different places, the last over Zagreb, Yugoslavia. We dropped on Graz and were hit with more flak, one of our engines was hit and it too was now