

El Toro, California
Bud Markel
Editor "The Torretta Flyer"

Dear Bud

The following are my comments re. B-17 vs B-24....

Comparing the two aircraft is like comparing apples & oranges.

By WWII standards the B-17 was designed as a high altitude machine. By the same standard the B-24 with its very efficient "Davis Wing" and the resulting high wing loading (higher than any other U.S. aircraft except possibly the Martin B-26) could only be considered as a medium altitude aircraft. A command decision sent it to the European Theater and by the same decision it was deployed as a high altitude aircraft. Emphasize, it was by direction, not by design, that caused it to be compared with the B-17 on similar missions.

There are other facts to be considered. The B-24 was equipped with far superior engines, the Pratt & Whitney, compared to the B-17's Wright engines. I am well aware of the performance of the Wright having accumulated approximately 2000 hours in the Wright equipped B-25. The missions planned for bomb releases at such altitudes forced the high wing loaded B-24 into the corner of stall or buffet. Many times we had to crack wing flaps to maintain any semblance of a reasonable bombing platform.

In the final analysis the B-17 was a better aircraft for the European Theater. By the same token the B-24 was far superior to the B-17 when operating in the aerodynamic envelope that it was basically designed for.

Hank Hewett
484th Bomb Group



Tallahassee, Florida
Dear Bud:

I hope this letter finds you and your wife, Bea, well. Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading through the interesting articles and notes in T/F No. 21. Brought back a lot of memories. Particularly enjoyed your summary of your most recent visit to England. My wife Lynn and I plan to travel to England in August, probably with the 97th Bomb Group returnees, and I plan to take along the information in your article

for use during our visit there.

The friendly rival account by Kenneth P. Werrell certainly made some interesting points that will certainly draw a wide variety of comments. I hope our bombing, especially non-visual bombing, was a lot more accurate than he indicates. In the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Summary, page 17, appears an account of impressive improvements in operational techniques in early 1944 based on P-51 long range escort and OBOE and H2X, radio direction devices, that made precision bombing possible through clouds and at night. Since I was radar-navigator-bombardier, I prefer the U. S. Summary version, which is more in line with my recollection of events on missions with the 97th Bomb Group out of Foggia. On the issue of loyalty to B-17 or B-24 groups, I feel a strong attachment to both since the radar equipped B-17 we took from Langley Field to San Pancrazio was initially based with the 515th Bomb Squadron 376th Bomb Group., where I met some great B-24 crews, including one Yugoslavian crew flying with the Group from that base, Also remember meeting Norman Appold at that base but it wasn't until much later, when reading James Dugan's account of the low level Ploesti raid out of North Africa, that I realized Norman Appold took part in that raid. A skeleton B-17 crew would be flown to the B-24 base to take the radar B-17 up to Foggia for missions out from there. We went to Sofia on 3/30/44, Budapest on 2 April /44, Bucharest on 4 April /44 and Ploesti on 5 April/44. On my flight record, those missions are certified to by Royal J. Brock, Operations Officer, 376th Bomb Group. On April 9, 1944, my B-17, and myself, were transferred to the 414th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group. I went to Fischamend Market on 4/12/44, Ploesti 4/15/44, and Weiner Neustadt on 4/3/44. The commanding officer at the 97th Bomb Group then was Col.(now General) Jacob Edward Smart. Although he did not take part in the actual low level B-24 mission to Ploesti out of North Africa he was very much involved in the planning of that mission (Ploesti-James Dugan).

As a result of damage sustained on the bomb run on 23 April 44 at Weiner Neustadt, part of the crew bailed out in the vicinity of Zagreb. Fortunately, we made contact with the Partisans there and in a few days five of us from the B-17 crew were joined by nine members from the 449th Bomb Group who crash landed their B-24 following their raid

on Schwechat on 23 April 44. The pilot of the B-24 was M.S. Rouse (on his 50th mission) and the co-pilot was Robert M Miller (on his first mission checkout). Naturally, we called them Alpha and Omega. They were a very interesting group as the original crew had about 20 missions out of England before coming to Italy to season new B-24 groups arriving in Italy. We all got along very well together in the Partisan infantry; and I can't remember much discussion about the relative merits -of the B-17 and the B-24, or their crews. With the gracious help of the Partisans, lots of walking, and considerable luck, we all made it to a British mission near Bos Petrovac and caught a C-47 (which serviced the mission and flew wounded partisans to and from the hospitals in Italy - particularly Bari). The literal name of that field is Honey Field and it was sweet to us. The Partisans have erected some World War II monuments at that location, including an old transport that was previously used to evacuate wounded Partisans.

B-24 Crew

Robert B. Bicher - Navigator
Joseph S. Beaulieu - Nose Turret
Robert M. Miller - Co-Pilot
J S. Walters, waist Gunner
Byron F. Erwin - Ball Turret
Clarence L. Mezo - Tail Gunner
James S. Thomas - Bombardier
M.S. Rouse - Pilot
T.N Nilson (D) .Flight Engineer (Zeke)
(Widow Rosa Nilson, San Leandro, California

I recently saw General Smart ,and Al Willing at the 97th Bomb Group reunion in Omaha, Nebraska., September 1991; and in October, 1991, Bob and Ellen Miller, Joe and Christine Beaulieu, Tom and Lynn Carroll, and Rosa Nilson and her brother Ernest Spivey, who accompanied her, had a mini reunion in Ormond Beach, Fl. and had a great time. If any of the others listed above are still operating we will enjoy hearing from them. I plan to attend the AFEES reunion in Savannah, Georgia., April, 9, 1992.

It really was a friendly rivalry. None of us were asked our preference on what plane we would serve in; but we were all obliged to do the best we could with what we had, and I think we did that.

Sincerely
Tom Carroll