
Letters To The Editor

Akron, OH

On 3/9/45 the B24s flown by Lt Paul P Viliesis, and Chester J Lalewicz collided. As I recall it was over the Adriatic and air sea rescue could find no trace of either aircraft or members of the two crews. Chester lived in the tent next to the one I lived in and was from Cleveland, OH. I have no idea what plane he was flying that day. John Beitling should be congratulated on this excellent listing and you for publishing it.

Very truly yours,

Clair Alexander 764 Sq.

Sierra Madre, CA

I received the FALL-WINTER edition of the FLYER a couple of days ago. I got to bed late that night because I couldn't put it down before I had read everything. It was really interesting all the way through!

I wanted to write to supply you with two corrections for the section on the B-24s lost in combat. The entry for 1/15/45 for the 824th Squadron: The plane was the "tail end Charlie of all tail end Charlies" on that day. We were the last plane in the operation put up by the 15th AF that day. We were on the way into Vienna having turned on to the bomb run from the I.P. We were probably a third of the way to the target when #3 engine was hit by FLAK. The Jerries with their 88s had a lot of opportunities to zero in on their targets by the time we passed over them.

Our crew saw no fighters in the area, and as far as I know, had not been alerted to the presence of fighters in the area.

Also, the pilot's last name had an unusual spelling. It was spelled BLOMGREN rather than the way it is shown on page 9. He was the only crew member whose life was lost. His chute failed to open when we bailed out just after we had crossed over from Hungary to Yugoslavia. Prynjavor was the nearest town of any size. The Partisans got seven of us together there within a couple of days. Then began the trek out to SPLIT and then VIS and then BARI. It took about a month. The first two out of the plane had landed in Chetnik controlled territory and didn't return to Italy for 75 days.

Better stop here for this could go on forever.

Sincerely,

Hugh S Bell 824 Sq

Richfield, MN

This is a crude way of corresponding but I am currently handicapped after knee replacement surgery Can't negotiate the stairs to my office equipment.

I must comment on how much I enjoyed the last publication of the Torretta Flyer, it was great. Having a lot of time on my hands at the present time, I began to lament on some of the articles., and surprisingly became somewhat bitter.

I scanned the mission record and compared it to my personal account, a lot of discrepancies as to the targets. I flew 33 sorties with not a record of any of them. Why you may ask? I was asked to fly as an engineer of a makeup crew to take a heap down to Gioia, and to pick up a reconditioned B-24 to be returned to the states.

We picked up the plane and flew to Rome to pick up some paintings purchased there by one of the officers. Naturally the plane was loaded with hitchhikers on the return trip. Guys were scrambling back to their various squadrons who were preparing to return home. A mishap occurred after take off from the Rome airport, the hinge on the right rudder trim tab broke resulting in everyone abandoning ship except the pilot, name unknown. The plane couldn't be controlled because of the vibration and broke in half.

I ended up in the Rome hospital with two bad legs and a burned face. After an investigation of possible sabotage I returned to our field in a B-17, sent there to pick up another engineer and me. My return to the squadron was full of surprises:

No flight records

My fellow crew members had already departed

No clothes

A few personal belongings

No records of two hospitalizations

No follow up on the crashed plane

No one knew anything.

I met Gordon Graham of Michigan briefly at one of the reunions, who remembered the incident but our time was too brief to complete the conversation. I wonder if anyone else remembers the incident.

Bud, if you are still with me, I want to thank you for hearing me out.

Thank You.

Warde Bernhardt, 824 Sq.