

#60. T/Sgt H.N. Ryan, flying in #60, “#66 went under our aircraft. All engines going and no fighters were after him--then an FW-190 went down after #66.” #66 pulled up along the right side of #63 which was flying the number two position in C-Flight 767th. #66’s number three engine was on fire. T/Sgt Russel H. Ritchel, right waist gunner in #63 fired at FW-190. The fighter dove down and burst into flames. #66 fell off to the right and exploded .

Tail gunner S/Sgt Raymond B. Spencer on lead ship C Flight 767th, was in contact with T/Sgt Russel H. Ritchel, right waist gunner on #63 in number two position. Spencer saw one of Capt. Miller’s ships explode. Ritchel told him it was #69 (Capalbo). A minute later Spencer saw another ship from Capt Miller’s flight break up and go down. That would have to be #66 (Lang) as #77 (Halley) went down intact but in flames towards undercast.



*Loading waist gun ammunition can, Every fifth round was a tracer shell as indicated by the color of the bullet tip.*

44-41158

B-24J 461BG 767Sq #77 Pilot: 2/Lt Max M Hailey, KIA, Walnut Grove, MO, Married. Missions: Unknown. S/ Sgt Jacob Herman III had 49 missions . Last sighted: 1200, Muglitz, Germany, 49-47’N 56-16’ Down : Pressnitz near Bruenn.

#77 was flying number 3 position in first attack unit. S/Sgt Robert F. Miller, tail gunner, lead ship in formation, “#77 was way out in back...1,000 yards behind. Fighters made repeated attacks on both planes,#66- #77 until finally #77 was hit, peeled off and headed down.” “Hailey downed by an FW-190,” said Arthur G. Hermansen Jr., left waist, on lead ship. Sgt Albert Thomas Arrotta, ball gunner on #77, “fighters knocked out 3 engines.” Bomber fell through undercast in flames. A crewman yelled at Hailey to “feather the prop!” There was no answer from Hailey. “77, 69, were 1,000 yards behind, 66 was 600-700 yards behind, Miller reported,”#69 was attacked by an FW-190 which shot out the number three engine. ”The aircraft flying number three position was downed by an FW-190...” S/Sgt Lloyd E. Kenyon in bomber #63, number two position, C-Flight, said, Hailey’s B-24 went down with 3 engines blazing. 6 KIA.

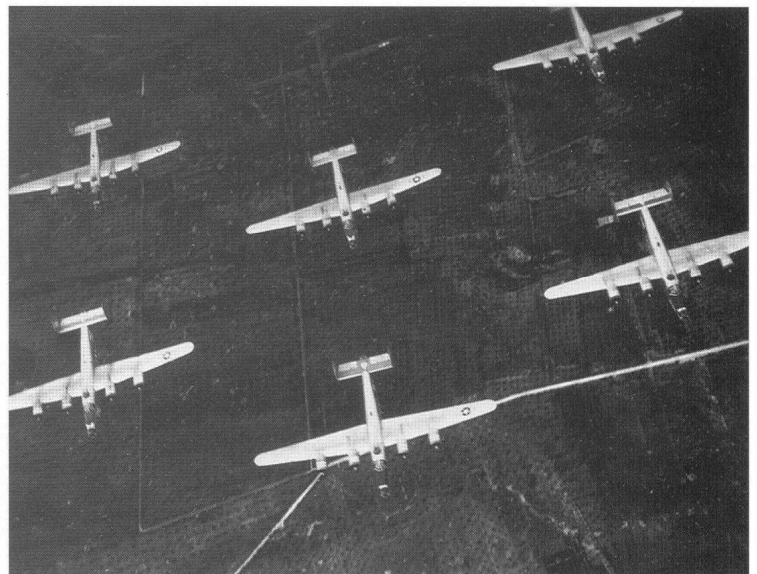
42-51319

B-24J 461st BG 767 Sq. #69 Pilot 2/Lt Frederick B. Capalbo commanding, 1st mission, Greenwich, CT. Single 2/Lt William C. Rundbaken-C/P had 33 missions. W/G John A Villars on very first mission. Left formation over Prevov,CZ. Ten or 15 minutes from IP slightly north of Prague, CZ. Last sighted at 1200, Muglitz. Down at 1200 near Prevov, CZ.

#69 left formation 10-15 minutes from IP #69 was 1,000 yards behind formation when enemy fighters struck. S/Sgt Robert F. Miller, tail gunner on lead ship said, “#69 was attacked by a single FW-190 which succeeded in knocking out number three engine, forcing the ship down toward the undercast.” Bomb bays on fire from leaking gasoline. Capalbo handed Rundbaken a screwdriver, so he could loosen throttle stops for more speed. Cpl. John A. Villars was on the flight deck setting the radar interpreter when the fighters attacked. He was mortally wounded or knocked unconscious. Copilot Rundbaken with no oxygen mask and in spite of the flames opened the bomb bay doors. He was badly burned and was overcome by the heat and lack of oxygen. Rundbaken collapsed on the catwalk of the forward bomb bay. Capalbo threw Rundbaken out to save him, but his chute was damaged by fire and did not deploy. The nose gunner Cpl. Richard McGuire was out of his turret and on the flight deck with the radio man. The bomber exploded. Rundbaken, McGuire and Villars KIA in this action.

44-41016,

B-24J, 461st, 765th Sq. 2/Lt Thomas K. West Commanding (KIA) Volin, South Dakota. Single, missions unknown. Last sighted 11:45 Muglitz, Germany. Shot down 12:30 49-27’N, 17-27’E, Prerov, CZ. According to left waist gunner, Trefry A. Ross, “We were hit by enemy fighters about 1200 o’clock on 17 Dec 1944, five minutes from the target. “Our aircraft immediately burst into flames, and I bailed out through the waist window.” West’s A/C was 1,000 feet below the formation. Sgt Thomas E Deibert, top turret gunner was killed by fighters. 2/Lt Thomas M Noesges, bombardier was struck in the head by a fragment from a German shell and had no recollection of getting out of the doomed bomber.



*461st Bomb Group combat box of six ships.*