
unforgettable. I also got to see the ancient city of Carthage that was still beautiful in its Mediterranean setting. At Tunis, there was a salvage dump of destroyed military equipment that covered an area of several square miles. I saw hundreds of wrecked German trucks, tanks, aircraft, and field artillery in huge piles, bulldozed into one giant scrap heap. There was dried blood everywhere, and the unmistakable stench of rotting flesh. By this time, I knew there was a war on, and that I would soon see more than this pile of excrement from the god of war.

I mention the dates and places of our travels because thousands of others preceded us, and many more thousands came after, following the shortest, safest route to rain death from an angry sky upon our enemies.

There was one small problem in our otherwise uneventful flight over the Atlantic. About half way across, the main fuel transfer pump quit just as we started to transfer fuel from the auxiliary bomb bay tanks to the wing tanks. We only had about an hour of fuel remaining in the wing tanks when the transfer process began. When the pump quit, we all went into a full panic. The flight engineer exhausted his bag of magic tricks, but nothing made it work. He kicked it with all his might in complete frustration, and it started right up, and never again misbehaved. His frustration, and short temper saved us all from joining the fishes in the briny deep.

Movies, TV, books, and novels by the dozens attest to many of the same stories, and every conceivable happening in "The Great War," so no need to dwell on parallel events.

But the feelings I had---I must share for the blissful little ones now darting around the old B-24 nose wheel in some kind of carefree game. For them I write.

Mission number three and four was my first experience under fire of any significance. Our target was the railroad yards of Bucharest, Romania, to slow down the transportation system of German supplies. A lone P-39 American fighter plane with engine trouble flew into our formation for the protection of our fire power. He was about twenty feet from my window, and we waved to each other. We were nearing our target, and the flack was starting to be worrisome. I was looking directly at him when he disappeared in a ball of orange flame. Terror overcame me as I realized he probably was just a twenty year old kid like me. Almost immediately we were hit with several bursts of flack this time aimed at us, and my fear mounted to uncontrollable dimensions at the sound of shrapnel penetrating the thin skin of our plane. I was consumed with horror at the thought of dying, and then at the thought of dying as a coward. For the first time of my life I prayed a totally sincere prayer that the fear would leave me, and that at least no one else would die because of my cowardice. I made the same fervent plea several times as we were hit repeatedly with bursts of flack. An emergency arose that occupied my full attention to the extent that my fears were lost in the duties at hand. As our damaged aircraft made its way to friendly territory, a great wave of peace came over me. I performed my duties as I was trained to do, and never again to the present time have I experienced the lack of courage that plagued me that day. As we landed at our Italian airfield, I was overwhelmed with gratitude, realizing that I was part of a miracle; a direct, and timely answer to my first real prayer. I made some promises to God that I probably didn't expect to keep, but the gratitude for that moment has remained with me, and I have tried to be at least a little worthy for the years of borrowed time I have enjoyed.

I crawled out of the plane when we rolled to a stop, and after

surveying the battle damage, I remember the warmth of the day, the smell of the grass, and my inexpressible joy at being able to live one more day. I was beginning to realize that the chances of survival would run out sometime before the magic fiftieth mission, and that at least some of my crew wouldn't make it home. (The average life of a bomber crew was seventeen missions at that time)

And so it became a private ritual to lie down in the grass after each return from enemy territory, and express my profound thanks to God. Each day since my last flight into enemy combat has been a bonus for which I may not deserve, but even so, has been granted to me. Even at this very moment as the grandchildren are playing under the old ungainly looking relic of another era.

There is of course much more to write, but perhaps these few words may suffice to write away some of the haunts of the past. Perhaps the sounds, the smells, the visions of friends in mortal peril, and the bad dreams of war days with the uneasy qualms of guilt may be buried at last; my final memorial to the last B-24.

Everett, WA

Dear Bud,

My wife, Delaine, and I were looking forward to meeting you at the 484th reunion in Tucson last month. We are sorry you were not able to be there and everyone missed you very much. Maybe next time.

What a delightful time we had rehashing old times and meeting two of my old crew members, Fred Roessler and Marv Fischer. This was our first reunion, and we felt bad that we missed their friendship all the years past, but we were both overjoyed to be able to come to the reunion and see them once again. I felt almost like I was twenty years old for a few hours.

I recorded a couple of hours of shooting the bull with them, and I have a lot of memories stored on a couple of tapes. I've enclosed a couple of articles I wrote for my kids that might interest you. We hope that you had a happy holiday and hope to hear from again.

Happy landings, Jud Suddarth 827th Sq. N on J.P.Roedel's crew
Airplane #O76

Editor's Note:

Jud writes about forgiveness. I have an experience to relate. I was invited to speak about my WWII experiences to my granddaughter's English class with students of diverse backgrounds. I told a war story (How our crew almost bought the farm). The students asked only a few questions and I thought the words had gone over their heads. Several weeks later the students wrote me how much they appreciated my talk, but one student asked if I had forgiven my enemies. I had never thought about it since the end of the war. I had to be honest to the student and to myself. It was a tough question, and I had to think long before responding. No, I have no hatred of enemy airmen whom we fought against, or of persons living today in former enemy countries. As for the WWII enemy leaders who brought death and destruction to millions, I can't forgive their hideous acts.