

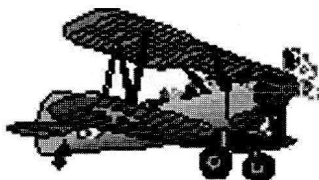
gray. Maintaining our bombers, still without ground crews and without stands. Had to use empty 55 gallon drums and climb out the top hatch to work on the plane. Still made flights along the African coast to keep us proficient. While our pilots and some other of the crew were away on one occasion, orders were received to move our B-24 to another location on the field. With the flight engineer in the pilot's seat and me as co-pilot, we fired up the inbound engines and, guided by another member of the crew outside, successfully taxied the bomber to another location. Cold desert nights and hot days. Check the inside of shoes each morning to insure the absence of scorpions or snakes; Africa having the more poisonous types of the latter. Tunis. Belly dancers and an airfield where we saw various aircraft that we only heard about in the States. British "Spitfire" fighter, the "Wellington", (AKA "Wimpy"), bomber and the Free French "Potez" medium bomber, among others. Major Haldeman borrowed and flew an A-20 attack bomber. Apparently this was a type that he flew previous to his B-24 assignment.

The Major followed the practice of ensuring that all members of the crew could double in another position if necessary. Due to the technical school I attended prior to volunteering for aerial gunnery, the bombardier's duties weren't much for me to duplicate, the navigator taught the mysteries of the sextant; etcetera. I had some "stick time" before, so I was flying the ship from the co-pilot's position after we gained altitude when we left Tunisia on our way to Italy. As we were flying along just below Sicily, the Major punched me in the arm and then pointed to the top of #2 engine. The cowling cover over the oil tank cap was flapping in the breeze because the Dzus fastener wasn't tight. He never missed anything!

Here we are in Cerignola, Italy, located on Torretta Airfield. I knew this airstrip as "Snowman", not knowing the true designation until I joined the 484th Bomb Group Association years later. We lived in tents and watched movies projected on the white wall of a building while seated on metal frames used to transport the fins that were then installed on the 500 pound bombs. The movie I saw on the night before our last, disastrous, mission to Weiner Neustadt, Austria, was "Going My Way" with Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald. It was a good memory to carry with me through the following eleven months as a P.O.W.

S/Sgt Bill Hogan- 827th Sq

178 Seconds To Live
Submitted by member Stan Hutchins 824
Sq.



After JFK Jr.'s accident, everyone wondered how it must be to fly in the weather when you are NOT an instrument pilot. This

article appeared in a brochure published by Transport Canada called "Take Five for Safety" in the early 1980's.

How long can a pilot who has little or no instrument training expect to live after he flies into bad weather and loses visual contact? Researchers at the University of Illinois did some tests and came up with some very interesting data. Twenty student "guinea pigs" flew into simulated instrument weather, and all went into graveyard spirals or roller coasters. The outcome differed in only one respect: the time required till control was lost. The interval ranged from 20 seconds to 480 seconds. The average time was 178 seconds—two seconds short of three minutes.

Here's the fatal scenario: The sky is overcast and the visibility is poor. That reported five-mile visibility looks more like two, and you can't judge the height of the overcast. Your altimeter tells you that you are at 1500 feet but your map tells you that there's local terrain as high as 1200 feet. There might be a tower nearby because you're not sure how far off course you are. But you've flown into worse weather than this, so press on.

With no warning you're in the soup. You peer so hard into the milky white mist that your eyes hurt. You fight the feeling in your stomach. You try to swallow, only to find your mouth dry. Now you realize you should have waited for better weather. The appointment was important, but not all that important. Somewhere a voice is saying, "You've had it—it's all over!"

You now have 178 seconds to live.

Your aircraft feels on even keel but your compass turns slowly. You push a little rudder and add a little pressure on the controls to stop the turn but this feels unnatural and you return the controls to their original position. This feels better but now your compass is turning a little faster and your airspeed is increasing slightly. You scan your instruments for help but what you see looks somewhat unfamiliar. You're sure that this is just a bad spot. You'll break out in a few minutes. (But you don't have a few minutes left.)

You now have 100 seconds to live.

You glance at your altimeter and you are shocked to see it unwinding. You're already down to 1200 feet. Instinctively, you pull back on the controls but the altimeter still unwinds. The engine is into the red and the airspeed, nearly so.

You have 45 seconds to live.

Now you're sweating and shaking. There must be something wrong with the controls; pulling back only moves the airspeed indicator further into the red. You can hear the wind tearing at the aircraft.

You are about to meet your Maker; you have 10 seconds to live.

Suddenly you see the ground. The trees rush up at you. You can see the horizon if you turn your head far enough but it's at a weird angle—you're almost inverted. You open your mouth to scream, but. . . You just ran out of seconds. Think about it next time—before you press on into marginal weather.