
Jack Malatsky, KIA, 827 Sq.

Submitted by his nephew Jack Forman

Jack Malatsky, a WW 2 B-24 Bombardier was lost in action Nov. 17, 1944, over the Adriatic Sea. Sidney J. (Jack) Malatsky was 20 years old when his airplane was hit by anti-aircraft fire while on its bomb run over Vienna, Austria. Last seen by other planes dropping out of formation, the "Lady Luck" did not make it back to its base at Torretta, Italy. Knowing they had only about 15 minutes of air time left, the crew, led by pilot Lt. Henry T. Mills, decided to ditch the aircraft rather than parachute into the sea.

The airplane, a four-engined B-24 Liberator bomber, and its crew of ten young men were attached to the 484th Bomb Group, 827th Bomb Squadron. The 484th, part of the 15th Air Force followed the Allied invasion of Italy and was flying from its aerodrome in southern Italy during 1944 and 1945.

Although my mother, Shirley Malatsky Forman had told me the story of her brother's loss and of how I had been named for him, it had been only a vague "family story" until recently. In September of 1998 I was searching the Internet when I came upon links which led me eventually to getting the actual Missing Air Crew Report for that unlucky mission. Also found was a Web site for the 484th BG as well as a letter from a gentleman who wrote to tell me that he knew and served with my Uncle Jack.

The story of Jack's final mission is of course fascinating to me, but certainly not unique in that great conflict. My plan is to post the MACR, with its account by the only survivor of "Lady Luck": Lt. Mills, in this site. I would like to make it available to all those who share my interest in keeping these stories alive.

According to the MACR, (Missing Air Crew Report) at the time, Henry Mills apparently lived with his parents at: 1329 Altamont Rd. Birmingham Alabama. I don't know how my family was contacted, but there were scam artists around at the time who preyed on people who were in situations like theirs. As no body was ever recovered they held out hope that maybe he had swum to shore and would return some day.

A man contacted my grandmother Anne Malatsky and offered, for a fee, to get information on what had happened to him. Maybe he would even bring Jack home. Naturally being in deep grief, she invited him to the house. The men of the family were waiting for him when he arrived and turned him back under threat of physical violence.

The report of Lt. Henry T. Mills, the pilot and lone survivor of the crash of B-24 "Lady Luck" was taken directly from the Missing Air Crew Report November 17, 1944, as follows:

"The aircraft was struck by flak on the bomb run, knocking out two engines and inflicting other serious damage, but no crew member was injured. An attempt was made to reach the Allied Air Base on the island of Vis. Approx. 15 minutes from the ETA at Vis, the remaining engines failed, thus leaving me with two alternatives - to bail the crew out over open sea or ditch the aircraft. I issued the order to prepare to ditch at about 8,000 feet, and the Navigator, F/O P.I. Lynch, replied a few moments later that the crew was ready to ditch. Seven men were in the rear of the ship and the Engineer, Co-pilot and myself were in the front.

"The ditching occurred immediately upon striking the water

the B-24 broke in half and the rear part of the ship from the bomb-bay back had already sunk when I got out of the cockpit. The Co-pilot, H.G. Martin, Engineer, S.A. Farstad and myself got out of the plane alive, but as our life rafts failed to work we were forced to stay afloat by means of swimming and the use of life vests. The Co-pilot and Engineer decided to make an attempt to swim for the island in sight and get help. I remained near the scene of the ditching as I had no life vest and had to concentrate entirely on staying afloat. That was the last I saw of any members of my crew alive.

"Approx. 2 1/2 hours later I was picked up by Partisans in a small rowboat and we immediately searched the area to see if we could find any signs of life but none could be found. The Partisans who picked me up had also found the body of Cpl. Guy Pledger, gunner in the crew, and his body was in the boat with me. I was taken to the island of Bisevo by the Partisans, and although we searched the surrounding areas, we could find no sign of any of my crew. I was taken to the island of Vis by a British Air-Sea Rescue unit, along with the body of Guy Pledger, which we left with the American authorities at Vis. From Vis I went to the hospital at Bari, Italy and then to my base.

"It is possible that the crew members in the rear of the ship bailed out, as I did not have contact with them from 8,000 feet on down. The Co-pilot was listening on interphone and talking to the crew, and I was in contact with Big Fence emergency radio station from the moment after I received the reply that the crew was ready to ditch until we struck the water. The men in the rear were Schultz, Lynch, Malatsky, Kaler, Brewer, Cosgrove and Pledger. I think this is highly improbable, though. I say this only because I am not positive as I am the only survivor."

John Hassan, 826 Sq.

John Hassan died 11/1/99 at 76. For nearly two months, Lt. John Hassan eluded the German army by sleeping in trees during the day and crossing mountains by moonlight. John Hassan, a navigator aboard a B-24 Bomber was one of two crew members who survived when their plane was shot down over Germany during World War II.

His fellow crewman was captured on John's 21st birthday when his plane was shot down," recalled his brother, Adam Hassan. "For two months John lived on wild berries and whatever wild fruit he could find." Eventually he was found by partisans and returned to the base that was under the command of Randolph Churchill, Winston Churchill's son." Hassan was quite ill he added. "He was suffering from malaria and dysentery and a loss of weight." After a short stint as an instructor in the United States, John Hassan was discharged and returned to his home in East Pittsburgh.

John Hassan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple heart, Air Medal with an Oak Leaf cluster, and an EAME Theater Ribbon with Seven Battle Stars. In 1992, Mr. Hassan was inducted into the Hall of Valor in Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Pittsburgh's Oakland neighborhood.

John Hassan, a resident of Penn Hills, died from complications of diabetes on Wednesday, Sept. 1, 1999, in the VA Hospital

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