

12 feet away because of the smoke. A little later he said "No, the tail is still there but they got Junior".

The plexiglass covering the turret was all gone and I was covered in debris. However I felt OK and pushed my mike button to tell the crew. There was no sound. The usual side tone on the intercom that let me hear myself was silent. My thought was maybe Rookie is right and I am gone. Fortunately it was only the intercom and not me that was gone. The plane had extensive damage. The right elevator and rudder were missing. There was a hole in the fuselage next to the tail turret about one by three feet. Dutch came back and found all the control cables on one side severed and others frayed. Adams had jammed his knees against the control yoke to keep the plane from pitching up until Shippy could engage the autopilot called George. Meanwhile the four of us in back were standing by the open escape hatch. After a few minutes of assessment it was decided to try to get home. Shippy made a sloppy landing. When the CO drove up to chew him out he looked at the plane and congratulated him. The plane went to the salvage yard.

This may be a good place to describe our flying gear. The Nose, Ball and Tail gunners had cramped quarters. Although we had the bulky fleece lined flying suits we could not wear them on the job. My usual uniform was an electric suit, boots and gloves. Over this I had lightweight coveralls. Next came a Mae West life preserver that could be inflated by two small carbon dioxide cartridges. Over the suit was a parachute harness. The parachute itself was a chest pack and hung on the side of the fuselage just outside the turret. Also hanging next to the parachute was an escape kit and my regular GI shoes in case I had to walk home. These were attached to a "D" ring that could snap onto the parachute harness. In addition I could wear a steel helmet and a flak vest. The intercom mike consisted of two carbon buttons held against my larynx by an elastic strap. Also, I had a 45 automatic in a shoulder holster. We normally went on oxygen at 10,000 feet. The rubber masks caused heavy sweat that ran down onto our throats. Since the outside temperature could be 25 or so below zero the sweat turned to ice. A towel used as a scarf corrected that problem. Most of the time I was comfortable. The plexiglass was like a greenhouse and, when the sun was beating down, it became hot. When the electric boots or gloves did not work it was freezing.

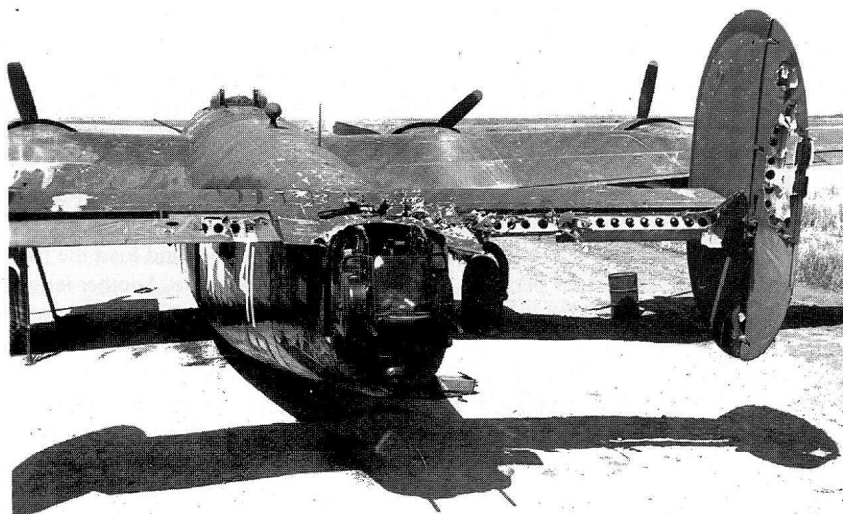
The tail turret was made by Consolidated who made the plane. It was hydraulic powered. Normally I partially closed a valve. This reduced the response speed a little but gave extremely smooth tracking. The guns were 50 caliber Brownings. Ammunition was stored in boxes in the back of the plane with tracks to carry the linked belts to the guns. The gunsight was electrical. It projected

a circular reticle, which was placed on the target. The system was simple but effective.

Our Field was about 9 miles from the small town of Cerignola and 20 miles from the city of Foggia. Houses in town were built of stone. There were no commercial buildings. The Cathedral was the dominant structure. Houses were side by side and opened directly on the street. Like Ralph's house they had a living room and at the back one or more small rooms. It was a treat to go to town for a haircut. The barber worked in his living room and a daughter would bring a basin of hot water for the shave and haircut. Standard price was ten lira or ten cents in the military script we used. Another treat was eating in town. Again the meal was served in a private house with perhaps a small table and chairs. The preferred order was eggs and chips, which were cottage-fried potatoes. Another common sight was plywood boards smeared with tomato paste and leaning against a wall drying in the sun. Fliers and dust from the street added their special touch.

One day I caught a ride into Cerignola to mail a package. Hitching a ride in the back of a 6x6 truck was the usual transportation. My cap blew off on the way. Since the truck stopped close

to the post office I decided to go ahead and mail my package. Unfortunately MPs stopped me for being out of uniform. A few days later I was called before Major Sherrick for disciplinary action. His sentence was to take a truck and the biggest goof-off in the outfit and pick up litter in the tent area. Although The Table of Organization qualified me for Staff



Ed Lamb's damaged B-24.

Sergeant I was still a Corporal. This was a result of the animosity against our Crew. At any rate the unfairness of it all struck me. We had returned from the rough Ploesti mission and here a Major who did not fly was telling me to pick up litter for a minor infraction. I asked him if I would be on the next promotion list to Sergeant. I knew Shippy had put my name in every month. The Major said my name had been removed. I then said if I was not on the next list I would refuse to fly. He said that was a Court Martial offense. I said no stripes, no flying. He said it was too late since the list had already been sent to Wing Headquarters. I said, "You SOB that's your problem". I expected to be dragged away to the nearest dungeon but I was so mad I didn't care. Sure enough I became a Sergeant in July and Staff in August.

Cigarettes were a common currency. We received a ration of toiletries, cigarettes, beer and chewing gum every week. I traded my beer and cigarettes for more gum or less desirable brands of cigarettes. These were traded to Italian kids who came through the tent area with almonds and oranges. A pack of cigarettes would