

## THE UNSUNG HERO'S LAMENT

*The Unsung Hero's Lament.* Nobody knows who wrote it, but it turned up in the 484th Bomb Group, training in Kansas prior to moving to Italy to join the Fifteenth Air Force. The story recounted the story of a B-24 pilot who made it to the Heavenly Hall of Fame where he was called upon to give his qualifications to be there with the likes of Julius Caesar, Ulysses S Grant, and others. His credentials were his flight in the Liberator.

This poem appeared in part in the book "Log of the Libertors", by Steve Birdsall. Edwin C. Range of Santa Clara, California who attempted to find the remaining stanzas ended up adding some of his own. We are reprinting some of the stanzas in the hope that the original author will step forward to be recognized. Reprinted by permission.



For there's a sort of manic madness in the  
Supcharger's whine,  
As you here the ice cubes tinkling in the  
Turbo-Balance line,  
And the runways strips are narrow, but the  
snowbanks they were wide,  
While the crash trucks say, in a mournful  
way, you're on your final ride.

The nose gear rocks and trembles, for it's  
held with bailing wire,  
And the wings are filled with thermite, to  
make a hotter fire,  
The camouflage is peeling off, it lends an  
added luster.  
While pilot heads are filled with lead to help  
the load adjuster.

The bomb bays doors are rusted, and close  
with a ghastly shriek,  
And the Plexiglas is smeared with some  
forgotten leak,  
The oleo struts are twisted, and the wheels are  
not quite round,  
And the bulkheads thin (Ford builds with tin)  
admit the slightest sound.

You taxi out on the runway, 'mid groans of  
tortured gear,  
And you feel the check-ride's practised teeth,  
gnawing your tender rear;  
The co-pilot sitting on the right, in a  
liquor-laden coma,  
Mingles his breath, like the kiss of death,  
with the put-put's foul aroma.

So it's off in the overcast yonder, though  
number one is missing,  
And the hydraulic fluid escaping, sets up a  
gentle hissing,  
The compass dial is spinning in a way that  
broods no stopping,  
And row by row, the fuses blow, with an  
intermittent popping.

It was named the "Liberator" by a low and  
twisted mind,  
The design was by the Devil, and his brother,  
you will find;  
The brother was a coffin-maker, who  
specialized in vaults,  
This concrete bird, with weight to match, the  
sum of all his faults.

He cried with glee, "I think I see a way to  
make a buck!  
I'll make a 'plane that'll never fly, the  
biggest Army truck;  
I'll attach a wing that'll never lift four  
engines off a strip,  
They'll send ten men, all insane, and crazy to  
take a trip."

So they filled the bay with bombs galore, the  
guns with firepower,  
They stuffed the brain of those ten insane,  
the nation's very flower;  
With words and music of glorious things, of  
wings and bars and stripes,  
But, when they saw those puffs of black, the  
cry was "Holy Cripes!"

"Where does it say, " they growled and  
glared, while dodging German flak,  
"That when we came to save the world, they'd  
surely shoot us back?  
We sought this place, this Italian base, to  
make the people glad;"  
But, it became quite plain to the ten insane,  
they they'd been surely had.

They banked steep left, turned homeward  
bound, these Army men who fly,  
One might think they're safe and sound, but  
there's always time to die;  
Six hundred miles, four hours still, to sweat  
the engines more,  
And now the eyes would scan the skies, as  
through the soup they bore.

The Alps ahead, three miles high, they  
couldn't see a thing,  
But, this Bomb Group knew the pertinent  
poop of Davis and his wing;  
Why there were two engines there, and two to  
spare, the B-24, no Jitney!  
With props in synch and mixture lean, now  
it's up to Pratt and Whitney.

So, over the Alps and past the Po, losing  
altitude as they flew,  
Past the place where Nero fiddled, and where  
Vesuvius blew;  
But, Big Gas Bird began to falter, to show  
that it was human,  
The leaks appeared, the instruments failed, no  
where was landfall loomin'.

As they let-down, the water came up, and lots  
of props were feathered,  
Hydraulic leaked and fuel got low, and now  
young faces leathered  
The radio-gunner called D/F, who asked "Did  
he know if they'd make it?"  
"I'm not sure," the radio-man said, "Hum a  
few bars and I'll fake it."

The Bird droned on, the land appeared, the  
crew felt glad inside,  
'Cause, if they had to bail out now, it was  
Land to which they'd glide;  
There's the base, those lovely tents, the  
chow-hall was in sight,  
But, first the landing, then debriefing, before  
the end of flight.