

Completed 16 missions when the group was converted to B-17, got checked out on a seventeen but preferred the good old B-24, (my first love), and told them so. There were some who stayed with the 34th Bomb group, but about 200 of us from the 8th Air Force B-24 units were put on a ship for Naples.

In charge of us was a Major. The ship was English and loaded with their troops. We were put down below under the water line. The Major informed the Captain of the ship that the U.S. was paying for 1st class passage for us and demanded that we be relocated to higher decks. We were ordered to stay below and not to appear on the promenade decks. We went upstairs with our 45's and demanded that the English Officers make amends. This resulted in the loss of our 45's from the English troops, who were sent below to take them. It was then that the ship's captain found out that there were no anti-aircraft gunners on board, and wanted us to do it. We refused once again and so our trench knives were taken away as some of the guys went after the English officers. The captain was about to charge us with mutiny, but with a change of heart finally let us come up the stairs. There were no more incidents.

I was assigned to the 484th Bomb Group and helped build the chapel with "tufi" (See note#1 below) block stones, blocked up 4 sides of our tent with stone, and cemented the floor. We added a P-38 drop tank for wash water. We then cut down a 55 gallon drum for the heater, and hooked up a fuel supply drum outside of the tent. Each cot had a headset hooked up to a radio somewhere within the squadron. The squadron tents were to the left rear of the headquarters building.

When not flying I would sometimes walk around the area just looking at the countryside. One day I met an old Italian with a mule and wagon, and said, "Hi" to him and he replied in English. We continued to talk, then he paused, and looked at me quizzically, "You come from Brooklyn, I too." It seemed he had retired three years before the war and had returned to his native Italy. He took me in the cart to the base of the mountains where he furnished me with fresh eggs, and bacon (See note #2 below) I would go up there many times for a big meal and bring back provisions for the guys.

One time we flew up to Rome and walked around in the cleared areas. We were soon bored with this so we ventured into the off limits part of town and spied a brand new MP motorcycle. We kicked up the stand and rolled it all the way back to our aircraft and tied it up in the bomb bay. We used to run back and forth from the flight line to the squadron area a distance of about two miles.

Flight time was spent flying missions, doing slow time after engine changes, and other test flights. I remember missions to Trieste, Yugoslavia, Innsbruck, Bleckhammer, Brenner Pass, and the Po Valley, some 26 missions before the end of the war.

One mission we headed for Yugoslavia over the Adriatic Sea and were just off the Yugoslavian coast when the lead element ran into a thick haze resulting in some midair's. The mission was a shambles and we returned to base.

There was a maximum effort mission that stands out in my memory. We were climbing and just about up to the alternate target,

when we lost our superchargers. The amplifier was replaced and the superchargers picked up again, but we were way behind. One bomb was dropped. We were just about back in the slot when the same thing happened and the formation left us in the dust. This was repeated three more times until there were no bombs left. Each time the superchargers let go the plane would fall off on one wing in a deep stall. It looked like the wing tip was touching the mountaintops. We were reported going down in the Alps when the rest of the group returned. We came in last and the brass did not believe our combat report so we were all reduced in rank, enlisted to private and so on.

The factory representative inspected the airplane and found that the supercharger wiring harness was badly corroded. We were all promoted back to our previous rank.

We were up on a test flight, slow timing an engine with just the pilot, co-pilot and myself. We were flying north following the coast line. The pilot wanted to listen to music and exchanged places with me so he could fiddle with the radio, but showed me on the map where the enemy lines were. I was so busy looking at the map that we sailed over the lines, when a flak shell popped nearby. "Where in the Hell are we?" I heard a shout. "Get over the water", which I did quickly. Both pilots got in their seats and aimed for a tramp steamer they spotted in enemy waters. It tried to get away, and did, as we had no ammo or bombs. Next they buzzed a fishing boat and headed over land and spotted a farmer piling hay on a large stack. They buzzed that and there was hay all over the place. Back at the base when the bomb bay doors were opened, a lot of hay fell out.

I believe there was a Captain Charles A Marshall (See note#3 below) who was the operations officer at the time.

Ed Lawler 484th BG

[Editors Notes]

(#1) Tufi (Caliche) block was a very soft sand stone that could be cut with an ordinary saw. Its use goes way back to Roman times. Once cut and in place it would harden with exposure to the elements.

(#2) Italian bacon or ham is called prosciutto, a type of uncured ham that is often thin sliced and served with melon. It would fry up very crisp to the American taste.

(#3) The Association has a Charles A Marshall (ASN 0-797570) listed in the roster who last lived in Salinas, California. He was shot down and listed MIA on 21 February, 1945 but returned to duty 1 March 1945. Listed MIA also at the same time were JD Cummins /navigator(current member) , Robert F Anderson/ bombardier, Charles A Harford/engineer (current member) and John R Gross/co-pilot.

The crew of Charles A Marshall (P), John R Gross/co-pilot (LKA Alabama), Alfred Denault (current member) Robert F Anderson/ bombardier(LKA Ardsley NY), Charles A Harford/engineer (current member), Joe Cataldo/radio operator, (LKA Milwaukee WI) Pete Regelman (D)/nose gunner, Rollo Richmond (D), /tail gunner, Bob Powers/upper gunner (current member), Bob Sorenson/hall Gunner (LKA Kenosha, WI (LKA=Last known address