



Lt Ivanov, Russian Occupation Army, Kecskemet, Hungary. Ralph Christensen met him on a trip to Odessa, Russia in May of 1944. Rarph Christensen photo 825 Sq

home after crash landing in the icy waters of the Adriatic Sea.

A few hours earlier the big bomber, on which Sgt Christensen is an upper turret gunner, was hit in several places by heavy anti-aircraft fire over Regensberg, Germany. The damage done by the flak was much more serious than was apparent at the time. Shell fragments had pierced a wing and ruined the intricate fuel system causing all of the fuel to pour into the tank for the #2 engine.

Despite all attempts to get the plane back to its field, two engines quit over the Adriatic Sea, because of lack of fuel due to the damaged lines. There was no chance to reach land. The pilot pushed the nose of the bomber down to maintain flying speed and called the crew on the interphone.

"I knew we were in serious trouble just as the two engines began to cough," said Christensen. " But I had hoped they would hold out until we reached land. The pilot's voice over the interphone, telling us to prepare to ditch, was far from cheerful."

Immediately after the plane struck the

water, Sgt Christensen extricated himself from the rapidly sinking craft by crawling out of the upper escape hatch, and jumped toward a life raft which had already been put in the water by another member of the crew.

"Everything was hazy in my mind at the time," stated the gunner. "The upper turret broke loose from its supports when we hit the water banging me on the head. I grabbed a rope for a few seconds but didn't have the strength to hold on. The next thing I remember was being pulled up on one of the rubber rafts."

It was three long hours before a rescue launch manned by British sailors, arrived to pick up the men. They had rowed around aimlessly, trying to stay warm. On the boat however they were bundled up in dry clothing and blankets, then given hot malted milk. It was the first fresh milk any of the men had tasted since leaving American soil.

After reaching land, the men were checked thoroughly by a medical officer at a nearby British Hospital, where they were also given a hearty meal and quartered overnight. Sometime later, a plane dispatched from their squadron landed at an adjacent airfield and returned them to their home airfield.

Returning from a mission the "hard way" is not so new to Sgt Christensen. Only three weeks before the crash landing in the Adriatic, he was flying his regular position on another crippled plane that was trying to get home. Forced down in Yugoslavia he spent five days getting back on that occasion. "In nine missions I think I have had my share of trouble for the whole war." He said. " The rest of it ought to be smooth sailing."

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**Mission Diary of
Charles T Lomax 767 Sq
Magnolia, NJ**

Introduction

The missions that follow below were typed in July 1984 from my diary kept from July 1944 until Jan 1945. Many of these

missions are still vivid in my memory, but as I typed this diary many things were refreshed in my memory that had long been forgotten.

As you read these missions you will notice that there is a total of 34 recorded, that would have been enough to complete my tour. I checked my log book and found that on August 7, 1944 we went to Germany and I had recorded a 6 hour flight time. I checked the book "15th Air Force History" for August 7, 1944. They recorded B-24s going to Blechhammer, Silesia on that date. I do remember going to Blechhammer one time when we lost an engine. We could not feather it due to it seizing up. I remember how difficult it was to fly home. We lost our electrical system, and a second engine was registering low fuel pressure which we expected to lose. With much difficulty we got back to the base OK. This was an aborted mission, but we must have been awarded a mission credit which could have made mission #7.

We took phase training as a crew at Boise, Idaho before being assigned to the 767 sq, 461st BG, 49th Wg, 15th AF based at Torretta, Italy 10 miles south west of Cerignola, Italy.

The following are the crew members

Pilot: Bob Roswurm
Co-pilot: Chuck Lomax (Mem)
Bombardier: Ross Young (Mem)
Navigator: Howard Sossamon (Mem)
Engineer: Cottengain
Radio Operator: Chapman
Nose Gunner: Wyatt L Busbee (Mem)
Ball Gunner: J Johnson
Tail Gunner: D Moore
Waist Gunner: Eisenberg

Eventually Bob Roswurm, Ross Young, and Howard Sossamon went into operations. They now flew group lead with different crews. I checked out and took our original crew.

Mission List

Linz, Austria. Ship #74. July 25, 1944

Bomb Load: 5 ea 1000 lbs, Fuel: full tanks 2700 gallons.

Four groups took part in the raid on the Tiger & Panther Tank Works which was 2000 yards square. Fighter escort met us