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altitude and our B-17G was moving down and away from the formation.

We were flying alone and continuing to lose altitude. Our pilot ordered us to jettison all of the loose equipment including the ammunition. We attempted to salvo the ball-turret but we could not unfasten it from the fuselage. I remember how quickly our ball-turret gunner, Jim McKenna, came out of the turret when we started pounding on it. The laugh we got from his antics helped

reduce the tension of our situation.

Our Gee Box (special navigation receiver) was inoperative as was our intercom. We were flying on three engines with one running on a prayer. We had the utmost confidence in our pilot and Flying Fortress, but we still were very worried. As we approached the English Channel I was able to contact Air Sea Rescue. We were tracked across the channel by ASR without having to ditch in the sea. We were low on gasoline. Hundreds of aircraft were returning from

their missions and many were trying to find airfields to land on. The inclement weather and poor visibility made a landing very hazardous. Would we have an air collision was one of my thoughts.

We finally made an emergency landing at an RAF airfield at Great Massingham with little or no gasoline in our tanks. We really sweated out this mission and landing. After being in the air for 9 1/2 hours we were very happy to be on the ground again.

The End

Odds and Ends  
826 Bomb Squadron  
By Rod Stewart

#### Against all odds!

In 1942, I met a young man who joined me in a prep school in Los Angeles to prepare us for entrance into the Army Air Corps. I got to be a pilot but Christensen, Robert D., washed out and became a bombardier. He got shot down on his 5th raid to Berlin. In the winter of '44, they moved Chris down to the POW camp just north of Nuremburg where there were 67,000 POW's, many of them Russian. While this was going on, my co-pilot, Robert D. Mason, of Syracuse, New York decided to stay at the base while the rest of the crew went to rest camp at San Caesaria, Italy. When we got back, I found out I didn't have a co-pilot. He and the crew had gone down on (his) third mission as the aircraft commander. He was interned at the same camp as Chris and one day, sitting on their bunks, Chris happened to mention L.A. Mason says that's where my pilot is from but you couldn't possibly know him. When Mason mentioned my name, Chris (told me after the war), that he almost fell out of his bunk! In a camp of 67,000 these two met. What are the odds of that ever happening to two people? I don't know where Mason is but Chris is well and happy in Houston, Texas.

#### Have a Happy New Year!

In the winter of '44/'45, we got replacement aircraft flown down to Istres le Tube A/P outside Marseilles. (sp?) These were the first planes we had seen that had the steel seats for the pilot and co-pilot. Just prior to our getting on board a C-47 for the trip, the squadron executive officer, a rolly-polly major I believe his name was Hicks, gave me a large denomination of francs and told me to fly on up to Bron A/P in Lyon,

France, and pick up some small mementoes that had been ordered a few months before. They were made out of aluminum, were about the size of a half dollar and showed a vulture atop the barrel of a .50 caliber mg. The shells in the m/g belt were first, 8, then 2, and then 6 or the 826th BS. We picked up a whole box of these and they were handed out to all squadron members. I had mine for years but somewhere along the way, lost it. It would be interesting to know if anyone else still has this coin in possession.

Now, back to the subject: New Years. We flew back to Istres le Tube from Lyon to spend New Years Eve there before going back to Italy. When we walked into the mess hall at the airfield, we noticed everyone was armed to the teeth. When we asked what all the firepower was for, we were told that the Germans were going to parachute women into So. France to kill off the high ranking officers in the area. We never heard any more about it but it did make for a 'cautious' New Years on our part.

#### The flak magnet and Augie.

The flak magnet was otherwise known as Major Riddle. I don't think he ever went out without getting shot up. On this day he was in the lead in Able 11 and we were off his right wing, or Able 12. From the IP to the target, he got shot up again and fired a flare to let the group know they were to drop on us as the alternate lead aircraft. Just prior to the target, we got two near-direct hits in the bomb bay. Fortunately, the bombs didn't go off and we dropped a short time later. Coming off the target, which was Augsburg that day, I noticed that the bomb bays would not close. The engineer, Stud Sowers, got out of the top turret and went to the bomb bays to see what the problem was. He reported the catwalk shot through and the hydraulic lines cut, (with fluid flying all over the place), we had no pressure to close the doors. As you remember, they slid up on either side of the fuselage like a venetian blind, and when

they don't close, you have a lot of drag. We couldn't stay with the group in that condition plus, with all the flak holes, we thought we had to be losing fuel somewhere. I asked the Navigator, Norman Weser, for a course to Switzerland. In the meantime we were checking the fuel gages for fuel loss but couldn't notice any. I asked the crew to take a vote to see if we should get interned or should we try to make it back to Italy. Let's go home they said. It was risky coming home alone, particularly passing over the Brenner Pass because the Italians or Germans were flying Macchi 202's and shooting down stragglers trying to get home. We made it but had to tie two parachutes to the waist gun mounts for brakes due to the loss of all the hydraulic fluid. We came down shooting red flares; I touched down as close to the end of the runway as I could, applied the brakes and held them down. Lo and behold, there was enough fluid in the system to bring us to a stop. Because the chance of fire is so great after the plane stops, (and has no cooling airflow), I told the crew to evacuate post haste or I would be climbing over someone's back when I got out. We all got out and ran like rabbits for a least a city block; expecting at any time to see the airplane go up in flames. It didn't and we went to get debriefed. The next day we went to look at the bird but, it had been towed to the bone yard. We went over and counted 177 holes in it. The maintenance officer said it wasn't worth fixing.

But now, what about Augie? It was the name of a little mutt we had befriended around the camp. I guess I knew she was a girl but I sure as hell didn't know she was pregnant! Neither did I know that while we were gone, she would elect to give birth to her puppies, (six of them), on guess where? My sleeping bag! Prior to that mission, she was just "dog", but after, we had to name her "Augie."

Major Riddle got back O.K. and a week later, finished his missions and went home.