

# The Last Mission

## Robert T Chalmers 765 Squadron



*Captain Robert T Chalmers (right) looks over the flak damage on "Judy R." M/Sgt Robert E Basiliere (left) of Pawtucket, RI, crew chief of the "Judy R" looks on. (Robert T Chalmers photo)*

Ronald Chalmers, Robert M. Chalmers, and a brother retired Navy Capt. George Chalmers.

Capt. Robert T. Chalmers, 25, pilot on a B-24 Liberator bomber in the 15th AAF, landed his ship, the "Judy R," at his home base with her hydraulic system shot out and the craft severely damaged by 20 millimeter shells. "I should never have attempted to bring her back," he added, "if I could have seen how badly she had been shot up in the waist and tail. The interphone was one of the first installations to be hit, though, and I was out of touch with the rest of the crew from the very first approaches to the target." Chalmers' crew was briefed for the Odertal oil refineries in Germany, but just before they reached the target, they were singled out by an angry Luftwaffe for the kill. Formations of FW-190s and ME 109s continued to harass the Liberator for fifteen minutes while she floundered about with her fuel lines slashed and three guns knocked out. "There must have been over 50 fighters that had their guns on us at one time or another," Chalmers said. "I remember two distinct attacks, but in between those "Krauts were hitting us from all angles." In the meantime a shot in our number three engine had

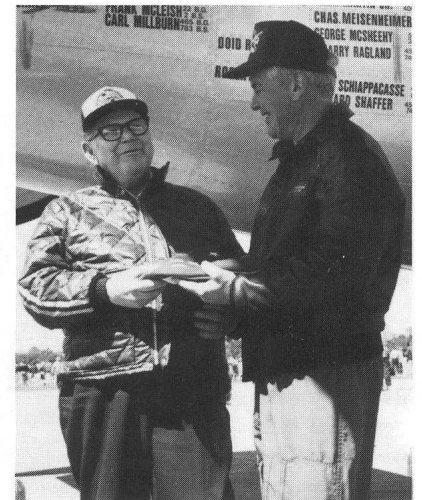
Robert T. Chalmers, 71, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, died June 17, 1991. He was born in Rutland, Vermont a veteran of three wars and 25 years of military duty, Lt. Col. Chalmers was pilot of the B-24 called the "All-American" when it was shot down in World War II. He was a member of the American Legion, Retired Officers Association, and Sons of the American Revolution. Survivors include his wife, Eunice Chalmers, sons, Larry Chalmers,

knocked out the supercharger and at the same time I noticed that a fuel leak was causing a dangerous shortage in our supply. We joined the rest of the formation after they came off the bomb run, and at a lower altitude we tailed first one and then another flight until we had cleared the dangerous territory. For a while we thought of setting her down in some friendly field, but it would have made the third time this crew had done so. The leak stopped in the meantime and we had sufficient fuel to risk a run to our home field."

But Capt. Chalmers' real problem began when he attempted to land. Since the hydraulic system that controls the flaps and landing gear was out, the engineer had to crank down these mechanisms. In place of the hydraulically operated brakes two parachutes were flung from the waist windows and simultaneously opened on the moment of impact. "The engineer couldn't get the flaps all the way down on one side," says Chalmers, "since a shot had struck the wing at that point. The steering wheel pulled violently and the nose of the ship seemed bound to strike first. My co-pilot and engineer both threw all of their weight behind the wheel and we managed to land her without a crack-up. After looking at "Judy R" on the ground and seeing that great gash in the wing and the two-foot hole in the waist, I'm surprised that we got home at all."

Chalmers served with a veteran Liberator group under the command of Lt. Col. Brooks A. Lawhon, that has flown more than 150 bombing missions and has twice been cited by the War Department.

Chalmers was graduated from Rutland High school in 1938 and attended the Curtiss-Wright Technical Institute in Glendale, Cal. He was employed as an aircraft mechanic and machine inspector by the Glen L Martin Corporation in Baltimore, MD. He entered the AAF January 2, 1942 and received his second lieutenant and pilot wings at Columbus, Miss., February 1943. He instructed advanced cadets in twin engines at



*Robert T Chalmers (left) receives the flag that flew over the "All American" last year from Bob Collings. Photo taken March, 1991 (Robert Chalmers Photo).*