
At Newport News, 4,999 other men and myself boarded the U.S.S. William Gordon, leaving 12 November 1944. The crossing was uneventful; but I did learn that the enlisted men had salt water showers while the officers had fresh water showers. And you know what? You can't tell a PFC from a Major without their clothes on. It's a good thing they didn't catch us going in or coming out at 3 AM.

Our ball gunner, Lou Galgano, was a seasoned crap shooter from Brooklyn. One day he would be rich and the next day broke. It's a good thing for him we docked on the right day in Naples on 26 November 1944. We disembarked and immediately boarded a British ship for a two day trip to Taranto.

We went through the Straits of Messina at night and could see smoke and fire coming from Mt. Etna. Our ship, the Arindel Castle, was once a luxury liner, but I was never in such filthy quarters in my life. I dropped my overseas hat on the deck in the water and slop and never bothered to pick it up. At meal time they brought the mutton stew, or whatever it was, up from the galley in pots, and we ate out of our mess kits. After the first meal, another and myself got the detail to return the kettle to the galley and wash it - in cold salt water. After one look at the galley with all its grease and cockroaches, that was the last meal I ate on board that ship. We did manage to steal some loaves of bread out of a storeroom in the middle of the night. We figured that would be safe to eat.

At Taranto we were loaded on box cars for the trip to Bari - shades of 40 & 8. After a day or two at Bari, we traveled by truck to Torretta, arriving at the 484th Bomb Group 826 Squadron 2 December 19, 1944.

We flew our first two missions on 27 and 29 December, 1944. The third on 5 January, 1945 and fourth on 7 February, 1945. That gave us plenty of time to fix our tent with three foot "Tufi" (soft sandstone) walls into a home. Being a replacement crew, I don't know why we didn't get someone else's tent, but we didn't.

About the only lumber available was old bomb crates and all our nails were second or third hand. However, there was a piece of 4" x 12" x 12' kicking around the squadron that nobody could find a use for. So the six of us enlisted men ripped it three times with a hand saw. It took us a couple of days or so but we ended up with some 2 x 4's for framing the door and walls. Next came the floor (bomb crate material) and then the stove similar to the one described on pages 34 & 35 of the Flyer #26, with some exceptions. Rather than a jeep fuel can, we cut 6" off each end of a 55 gal. drum and mashed them together. The fire pot was the same as described. For a stove pipe, we cut the ends off of 75 mm casings and stacked them together. When kerosene was available we cut it 50-50 with 100 octane gas. This burned better than straight 100 octane. When using this mixture, we had a problem of soot in the chimney. We could clean the chimney by getting the fire pot good and hot, turn off the fuel until the flame went out, then turn the fuel on and run like hell. This was not too desirable because a couple of tents burned down and the wheels took a dim view of it. So we rigged up a pulley on the center pole of the tent with a beer can full of sand suspended over the chimney on a control cable which could be lowered and raised in the chimney to clean the soot.

Our next project was hot and cold running water. We fashioned a lavatory out of you guessed it - bomb crates with the end of an oxygen tank for the sink. We first made a coil of aircraft tubing to go in the stove. We figured that as long as it contained water it should be OK, like our mothers' aluminum pots and pans. But when we fired up the system it promptly melted. Too much magnesium content I guess. We scrounged up some copper tubing somewhere which worked fine.

With a 55 gal. drum of water outside and a drain to a dry well, we were in business.

In the last Flyer #27 I tabulated our 24 missions along with excerpts from my diary. So I won't go into that again. I cross-checked my list with the 484th's mission list in Flyer #25 and they are 99% in agreement.

One thing that confuses me is: my diary tells us that on the mission 17 February 45 to Trieste, 501 & 502 collided in midair and went down. In checking the aircraft list in Flyer #24, I can find no ship 501, and 502 is listed returned to ZI. Further checking shows 826 ship number 44-48828, Bells of St. Joe with Capt. Kenneth Arson as pilot, and a plane from the 826 squadron with Lt. Abner McDavid as pilot, were both involved in a mid air collision 17 February 1945. Can anybody shed any light on this?

I think our crew picked up two Purple Hearts in Italy; Odis Johnson E caught a piece of flak near the eye over Vienna 7 February 45 and J.W. Delk T/G a cut hand by flak on the Trieste mission of 17 February 45.

Sometime in the spring of '45 our crew purchased, for \$100 I believe, from a crew going home, a Harley motorcycle. I believe it is the same Harley described by Ray Surette in Flyer #14 page 24. I don't know what became of it after the war was over. It was pretty well shot by then anyway. The tire casings were repaired with fender washers and the trip through a barbed wire fence with Lou Galgano B/G aboard didn't help it any.

We left Torretta 17 May, 1945 by truck to Gioia where we picked up a brand new B-24M and flew it back to the ZI via Marrakech, Azores, and Gander arriving 30 May 1945 at Bradley Field, Connecticut. After a short train ride to Camp Miles Standish, MA, the crew split up and we went our separate ways.

Between 30 May and 2 November 1945, when I was discharged, I was in eight different army camps besides being home for a 30 day furlough and two 15 day furloughs. I didn't stay in one place long enough to get my laundry done. At one point in early Aug I was in Big Spring, TX where I volunteered for a tour in the Pacific. I was in Tampa, FL enroute to Ft. Myers and B-29 gunnery school when VJ day came.

After discharge I soon got itchy feet again, and in Feb. '46 left on a 10 week hitchhiking trip from NY to CA and back. On that trip I visited Lou Galgano B/G in Brooklyn, J.W. Delk T/G in Dallas, TX, Walt Nilson R/O in Holtville, CA, and Dana Stewart in Champaign, IL. From the fall of '46 till summer of 1950, I tried my hand at higher education at Cornell University. My goal was a Bachelor's in EE, Master's in Heat Power, and PhD in Time and Motion. But being in the reserves, in July of '50, I was invited to volunteer for 12 months' active duty. I needed a vacation so I duly volunteered and was assigned to a SAC B-50 outfit at Hunter Field in Savannah, GA. Our reason for existing there was: we were prepared if necessary to drop an A-bomb anywhere in the world in 24 hours. The only problem being, if we met our refueler on the way in, we would have enough fuel to get back out to meet another refueler. If not we had just enough fuel to reach the target. Period. But Gen. Curtis LeMay said, "he would not hesitate to lead us on a one way mission". Real comforting! When I got out in July '51, I got to thinking that when and if I finished school, I would be 30 years old.

So I quit school and went to work. Spent 30+ years as a construction electrician, retiring on my 62nd birthday.

With best wishes,

Allan Davidson, 826 Sq.