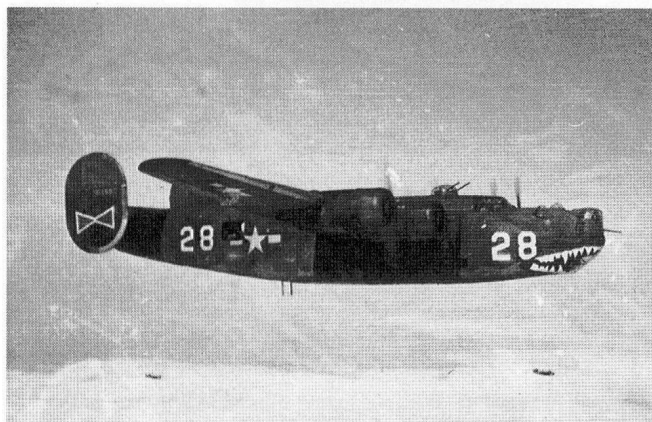


More information on the Dec 17, 1944 Mission to Odertal

*Losses of the 49th Bombardment Wing Fighter Escort
by John D Bybee*

Losses of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups

| Serial | BG | Sq | Nose | Ship Name | Pilot | Disposition |
|----------|-----|-----|-------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 41-28913 | 461 | 767 | 45/67 | | Lt Robert A Galvan | FTR-CR near Roschuiio |
| 42-50934 | 484 | 824 | | Little Joe | Lt Charles A Himmler | FTR-CR near Wenzeldorf |
| 42-50953 | 461 | 765 | | The Flying Finger | Lt Philip J Crossman | FTR-CR near Bruenn |
| 42-51319 | 461 | 767 | 69 | | Lt Frederick B Capalbo | FTR-CR Berau |
| 42-51322 | 461 | 767 | 66 | | Lt Charles V Lang Jr | FTR-CR near Gleiwitz |
| 42-51324 | 461 | 765 | 2 | Paulette | Lt Kenneth B Smith | MF-CR near Omsenic |
| 42-51835 | 484 | 825 | | | Lt Roger A. Martin | FTR-CR near Liebau |
| 42-52025 | 461 | 765 | 26 | Arsenic And Old Lace | Lt Gerald R Smith | FTR-CR near Bruenn |
| 42-95304 | 461 | 766 | | | Lt Nicholas Sidover | FTR-CR near Agram |
| 44-41016 | 461 | 765 | | | Lt Thomas K West | FTR-CR near Roehren |
| 44-41158 | 461 | 767 | 77 | | Lt Max M Hailey | FTR-CR near Proesnitz |



Ship # 28 "Little Joe" 484th BG Lost 17 Dec 44



Ship # 52 "Shady Lady" 461st BG Lost 17 Dec 44

In reviewing my records on bomber losses on 17 December 1944 I have additional information on Lt Himmler's aircraft that was shot down that day. The 484th Bomb Group led the mission with 29 aircraft and by 0912 was at 9,000 feet over Bovino, 1003 at angels 16 over Split, 1215 at angels 24 bombs away.

42-50934

B-24J 484 BG 824 Sq. #Ship 28 "Little Joe" Pilot: 1 Charles A. Himmler, Trafford, PA. KIA. Mission Total: 13-14. Lt. Himmler was flying in Baker 12 position, which I take to be tail-end Charlie of B-Flight. (*Editors Note:* The lead aircraft in each attack unit such as Baker which consisted of 6 aircraft in two 3 plane elements one following the other in V formation. Baker 12 would be behind the leader and either to the left or right. From the pilots flimsey page 27 Torretta Flyer No 27 Winter Spring issue, either Gaskill Baker 22 or Hitzing Baker 23 would be flying tail end Charlie. See also page 19 of the same issue for the flight diagram.)

The Wing made a northwest turn east of Bratislava towards the IP at Muglitz. At 1126 the 484th was roughly midway between Bratislava and Muglitz. Himmler's number two engine began overheating and he fell behind. At approximately 1145 the 49th Bom-

bardment Wing began the turn onto the IP at Muglitz. The Germans with exception of Himmler's B-24, bypassed the 484th and 451st and slammed into the 461st, the high and trailing group. The American documents at first seem to indicate that Himmler dumped his bombs and caught up with the formation, made it to the target and was shot down at about 1252 near Spombataly, Hungary according to Missing Air Crew Record .(46-43'N, 17-20E or 47-30'N, 17-20E).

However a review of German and later American records indicate that between 1145 and 1200 noon, two FW-190s out of a gaggle of six that were sweeping past the 484th, peeled off and made an attack from six o'clock high on Himmler's B-24 at the moment he was dumping his bombs. "Little Joe" took hits in waist and bomb bay, burst into flames and fell in a flat spin. The bomber crashed near Wenzeldorf, CZ., about 14 miles northwest of Sternberg. German records also show he was down at 1200 noon, the fighter attack took place at 1145 with direct hits in bomb bay and waist. It disappeared between Vienna and Lake Balaton. Wenzelsdorf, CZ 14 miles Northwest of Sternberg. 49-54'N 17-07'E. Wenzeldorf is about 300 meters of Maaerisch-Schoenberg.