
The Calvin Teel Story

Submitted By Emmett Goff

Editors Note: *The following manuscript was received unedited from Emmett Goff, and would require a complete rewrite for better understanding. Because the story was received very late after this issue was already in the final stage, there was not time for a rewrite. We present it here partially edited for our members interest and information.*

I will try to cover events that happened to me over 50 years ago at a time when I was flying combat missions as a Radio Operator Gunner with a crew of ten men that had trained together in the states and who were assigned to 825th Sq., 484th B G, 49th Wg, 15th AF in Italy.

This is a "True Story" that really happened to me a long time ago. The material for this report comes from four sources: A. My own memories, B. The diary of my fellow crew member, Ralph N. Christensen: His notes were jotted down daily soon after the experience so they could be more accurate. C. Material taken from the historical files of the 484th Bomb Group Association. D. Escape & Evasion reports that were classified Secret on 15 December 1944. I received a photocopy around 1981 or 1982 after it had been declassified. The 15th AAF at that time doctored the events that happened in the experiences of my crew after we were interviewed in Bari. If the powers that guided intelligence reports during WW II, rewrote what they thought had happened to my crew with the loss of one bomber and the death of one crew member, if they did it once, they must have done it many other times.

I was discharged from service on 24 October 1945, honorably, at Tyndall Field, Florida. One folder that I was given at that time was my Individual Flight Record, with copies of all my Base assignments and memos of promotions. The Copy of the report that we were considered MIA (Missing in Action). We were shot down after bombing targets in Graz, Austria on 11 December 1944. After I sent a copy of the MIA report to each of my crew members, Ralph Christensen sent me the material that he had kept in his diary. In time, he also sent me other records, such as the correct dates and bombing sites of our missions, and the events leading up to the combat mission to Regensburg, Germany, on 5, February 1945, and the ditching in the Adriatic Sea on our return. Two things stand out in my memory that followed the ditching. The 15th AAF lost a brand new aircraft and I lost a brand new pair of four buckle over-shoes that I had just received from my mother.

Our first combat mission that was flown by our crew was on November 6, 1944, to bomb the oil refineries in Vienna, Austria. Ralph wrote in his diary, we had no problems, a routine mission. My Individual Flight Records showed that we flew in a B-24 H, and the total flight took 6 hours and 45 minutes. Usually, we carried 500 pound GP (general purpose) bombs in racks for three bombs on each side of the cat walk in both the forward and the rear bomb bays. I don't think that we ever carried a full load of 12 each 500 pound bombs, but it was always possible. On longer missions and for higher altitudes, the bomb load might be no more than one ton to one and a half tons. If these bombs were not dropped, we were supposed to return them to the base, to be used again.

The 484th Bomb Group Headquarters was located southwest

of the city of Cerignola, Italy at the north end of parallel runways. The 825th Bomb Group was west of HQ and in separate buildings. The quarters for enlisted men were lined up in rows of six man field tents, which could hold the cots and belongings of the six air crew members. The quarters for officers were lined up and in rows using six man field tents, for the use of four officers. These tent areas were segregated as the two groups of men might fly together and possibly die together, but they couldn't break the military code that prevented social contact.

The 484th B.G. and the 461st B.G. used the same runways and after taking off on mornings for bombing missions, formed up by groups making large circles over the base. The first hour seemed to be to climb to higher elevations before starting on the several turning points on the way to the target. Once each formation started north, they continued climbing toward the bombing altitude so that they would have plenty of room to cross the 13,000 foot range of the Alps Mountain peaks.

I remember that our first bombing mission was kind of dreamy as nothing happened, at least to us. The temperature was around 20 below at altitude over the target. There were some flak bursts that appeared far below us and also off in the distance. The scenery as I viewed it from the waist window, was something you might see on Christmas cards, with snow on the mountain tops and all so very peaceful. The Danube flowed from the north west to the south east through Vienna, but at five miles up, I couldn't tell if it was blue or not.

The second mission was flown on 16 November 1944 to bomb targets in Munich, Germany. This was a seven hour and 55 minute mission. Ralph Christensen wrote that he didn't know the exact target, but we were hit by flak that damaged our oxygen supply. After the bombing run, we stayed with the formation till we were across the Alps and when the oxygen supply was used up, our crew had to return to base at a lower elevation where oxygen was not needed. Ralph wrote that after landing at our home base, and after an eight hour flight, that we had very little gas left. Ralph mentioned that four of the five days preceding our second mission, we got up early, went to briefing, and then after long waits, they canceled the mission because of bad weather. Stand downs occurred more often during the winter months. When this happened, each member of the crew would return every piece of gear that he had checked out in his name, e.g., an electric suit with gloves and booties that were wired to be plugged together; a flak jacket and helmet to wear in flak country; a parachute and harness; a Mae West life jacket; and an escape kit with maps and U.S. money; eight 5's & eight 1's. All this gear was carried from the flight line shack to our plane in a B-2 bag that carried the items that had been issued and had to fit the individual: goggles, oxygen mask, glove inserts, and flight boots. When you changed clothes in the plane, your ground clothing went into the bag, as soon as you were dressed for flight.

The third mission was on 19 November 1944 for a bombing of the Marshaling Yards at Vienna, Austria. Ralph recorded it as a routine mission with little flak and only a couple holes in the plane. My records show it was a seven hour and 10 minute round trip.

The fourth mission was on 22 November 1944 for Munich,