

with no difficulty.

Our party embarked at once on a British Cruiser where we spent the night 12 December and on the morning of 13 December transferred to a British Destroyer which landed us at Bari, Italy the next day.

We were all well treated on both ships, in spite of over crowded conditions on the Destroyer which was carrying about 38 extra personnel, many of them escaped British POWs.

Capt. Kennedy, interrogator completed his report of the events as he saw it from our answers to his questions. He didn't see us until after we had been showered, dusted to be sure we were deloused, and given all new clothes. We spent our first night in the hospital and given a chance to relax before the debriefing on the morning of 15 December 1944.

Back in Yugoslavia before we left for Italy, Ralph Christensen must have made little notes of things that were happening in our stay in the town of Benkovac so as to keep his diary up to date. His writing follows: "Tuesday Dec 12, 1944. Got up at 6:30 AM ate breakfast of soft boiled eggs, brown bread, and strong coffee. In addition we had our choice of wine, cognac, vodka, or vermouth.

"We went out to the plane in a bus. Half the body of the plane was buried in the ground. (Ralph thought that half of the plane was buried, but it wasn't. It was just ground down from the friction of sliding down hill. Everything was piled against the bulkhead in the waist. Ralph could see the metal that had curled around me after the crash landing.) The propellers were scattered all over the field. We took out all the 50 Cal. guns and ammunition and gave them to the Partisans.

"We rode back to town and attended Yurochko's funeral. The Partisans had arranged everything. They had 6 Partisan Pallbearers, a guard of honor of 25 Partisans. The funeral services were in St. Gospa's Catholic Church with a 20 voice Choir singing in the service. Yurochko was buried in St. Gospa's Cathedral Cemetery with full military Honors. The Guard of Honor fired a volley of shots over his grave. One of Eddie's dog tags was placed on his grave. (Benkovac was a small village in 1944 that seemed to have been shelled, bombed or strafed several times. Every building had damages except the little St. Gospa Church, and it appeared untouched.)

"We went back to Partisan Headquarters and waited until they got a bus and took us to Zara, Yugoslavia on the coast. On the way we saw a few skeletons of Nazi and Italian planes which had been shot down or crashed. We arrived at Zara and got aboard a British Ack-Ack Cruiser H.M.S. Colombo. We slept in the seamans mess that was used by the Royal Marines.

(Before leaving Benkovac, we were fed from the Partisan's supply of air dropped K rations and a little meat that looked like a large rabbit when it came out of the oven. The whisper that it was roast dog caused most of us to pass it by. There were several uniformed Partisan soldiers that rode on the bus with us to Zara. One female soldier, who carried a weapon slung under her shoulder that looked like a grease gun, appeared as tough as her gun. She never smiled once. As there were no seats on the bus, the trip was spent squatting, leaning, and hanging on so as not to fall into the big hole in the middle of the floor of the bus. The only scenery that I saw during this drive was an abandoned air strip with old planes. Most of the time I watched the road through the hole in the floor.)

"Wednesday Dec 13, 1944. We ate breakfast, sausages, toast,

tea. Got our bags together and transferred to a British Destroyer HMS Bicestra to take us to Bari, Italy. We met 2 other air crew who had been shot down in Austria and taken 38 days to walk back. We also met a group of British soldiers who had been prisoners of the Germans for 3-1/2 years. The British Crew drank tea with no sugar 6 times a day. We slept on the ship. "

Ralph Christensen wrote his diary over 50 years ago. Many of his notes help trigger memories for me that I had long ago forgotten. I remember that we had a choice on the Destroyer of sleeping in a hammock or bunking on the shelf attached to the ship's hull. Most of the crew tried and failed with the hammock idea. The sailors that served me tea, pre-sweetened the water in the teapot with a dark coarse crystalline sugar. I would consider it the opposite of our refined sugar. While on board, some one taught me the basics of cribbage. Besides reading or sleeping, cribbage was a good pastime while on the ship. When we did leave Zara, the Adriatic Sea was very choppy and rough. To keep from joining those who became seasick, I helped ease my feelings of queasiness by going out on deck and watching the horizon. It helped a lot.

"Thursday December 11, 1944. The Destroyer speeded up to 24 knots, arrived at Bari, Italy at 1:30 PM. A truck came and took us to a hospital. The doctor there checked us over, dressed our cuts and bruises. They deloused us with DDT after we had stripped off all our clothes and scrubbed down with big bars of lye soap in the showers. We received all new issue of clothes, field jacket, o d shirt, tie, o d pants, cap, socks, underwear, belt, shoes, and sweater. (We stayed over night in the hospital.)

"Friday December 5, 1944. We were taken to 15th Air Force Headquarters and were interrogated by an English Captain. We reported Eddie Yurochko's death. They called for transportation back to our squadron. I helped Lt. Kaiser write a letter to Yurochko's parents. He was 19 years old when he died.

"We went to the airfield. A B-24 from our squadron came and we arrived back at our base in Cerignola, Italy, about 3:30 PM.

The above five days recorded in Ralph Christensen's diary, covers all of his notes that he sent to me. I saw and remembered some things that he did not mention that may have only happened to me. My notes are bracketed.

The names and ages of the 10 crew members:

1. Ruben J. Kaiser, age-28, b. 29 Nov 1916, d. 5 June 1990, pilot.
2. Lane S. McKone age 26, b. 9 Mar 1918, d. 29 Aug 1994, nav.
3. Chester L Jones age 25, b. 7 Mar co/pilot.
4. Charles F Elsesser age 24, b. 11 Aug 1920, d. Dec 1975 ng
5. Ralph N. Christensen, age 23, b. 11 Feb 1921, u/g.
6. Charles J. Shanklin, age 23, b. 7 July 1921, d. 30 Jun 1993, e.
7. Charles E. Laster, age 23, b. 7 Sept 1921, bomb.
8. Albino Frigo, age 21, b. 10 Dec 1923, d. ca 1991, t/g.
9. Calvin R. Teel, age 20, b. 4 Jun 1924, d. 2/11/98 r/o.
10. Edward Yurochko, age 19, b. 13 Nov 1925, d. 11 Dec 1944, b/g.

During the 484th Bomb Group Association Reunion when it was held November 1986 in San Antonio, Texas, Ruben Kaiser