

er bad, finally bombed Villach, Austria, Fifteen flak bursts over target, seven holes in plane. Mission #18. Pondenone, Italy. I'll always remember this one. We rallied left off the target and as I sat up in my turret looking down through the bomb bay at the falling bombs, I noticed a building with a big Red Cross on the roof and all of a sudden in a puff of smoke, it disappeared. Mission # 21. Malcontenta, Italy. Toggle Annie's 100th mission. 14 Apr 1945. Our last three missions 22, 23, and 24 were uneventful missions against front line positions in the Po Valley ending 17 Apr 1945. Toggle Annie flew five more missions between then and 24 Apr 1945. The 484th Bomb Group flew its last mission 26 Apr 1945.

To the best of my knowledge, of the sixteen original planes in the 826th Squadron only Toggle Annie and one other, Darling Darlene #50, returned to the states after the war. And during the time period that the Squadron was operational(362 days), it received twenty-eight replacement aircraft. What does that tell you?!

No small thanks goes to the ground crew whose dedication kept Toggle Annie in the air for 107 missions. The only one whom I remember was the Ground Crew Chief, Thomas Collins. I am sorry to report that he died in 1981. I guess that he took better care of Toggle Annie than he did of himself

I have not been able to find out who flew Toggle Annie home to the States. Bob Reed told me that he and Dana wanted to bring her home but they were outranked by someone. Chickie O'Shea (Vincent's widow) told me that she remembers meeting the pilot who flew Toggle Annie home at one of the Group's reunions, but doesn't remember his name. Only that he was wearing his uniform at the time. That rules out quite a few. Not too many could fit into their uniforms even if they did have them.

I have obtained a copy of "Liberator America 's Global Bomber" by Alwyn T. Lloyd which is the best text, hands down, that I have seen. Appendix X is a list of 57 B-24s that flew 100 missions or more. With the help of "B-24 Liberator, Combat and Development History of the Liberator and Privateer" by Frederick A. Johnsen I have determined that of the 57 planes listed, twelve were in the 15th Air Force. Top honors in the 57 go to Lady Corinne of the 15 AFs 486th Bomb Group with 154 missions. Next in the 15th is Boomerang of the 376th with 125 missions followed by The Blue Streak of the 376th with 110. In fourth place is Toggle Annie with 107 Missions. I realize the list may not be complete, but fourth place in the whole 15 AF is not to be sneezed at. At any rate, I believe 107 missions in 360 days may be a record in itself.

Toggle Annie made one last stab at immortality when she got her picture and a few lines of text in the September 1979 issue of the American Legion Magazine in an article entitled "What Became of the Big Bombers?" " by Clee Woods. I asked for and received permission to reprint the article as it appeared. However, my attempts to contact the author through them, were not fruitful. I wanted to determine when he actually visited the site, and wrote the article. I find it hard to believe that all those planes sat out there in the desert for thirty-four years. But having been in the military, nothing should surprise me. In the article, he states that Toggle Annie flew "90 daylight missions and 17 night runs. 107". I am sure that he was confused by the 17 red bomb symbols painted on Toggle Annie's score-board. These represented the double missions that I discussed earlier, not night missions. On my last trip through Albuquerque in March of 1996, I visited Sandia Air Base in an attempt to see if I could find out the actual date of her destruction; "her date of death" as it were. Since I had determined

her "date of birth" fairly accurately., this would have completed my chronology. But alas, it was not to be. I had been through Albuquerque a few times prior to 1979 and if I had known that Toggle Annie was there, I would have gone to visit her and perhaps made some effort to save her from her ultimate fate with the cutting torch. And so concludes The Saga of Toggle Annie.

In 1994, I managed to track down all the members of Dana Stewart's crew and found them all alive and relatively healthy considering our ages. No canes, no walkers, no wheel chairs. We have held annual reunions since 1995. But, that's another story for another time. We lost some of our bragging rights when the tail gunner, J. W. Delk, passed away 12 Jan 1998. Food for thought: 14 April 1944- Toggle Annie arrived in Italy. 14 April 1945- Toggle Annie flew 100th mission. Bob Dole injured 14 April 1954- I was married. 14 April 1994- I underwent an angioplasty 14 Apr 1998- ????? I have included as an addendum, the following:

Bibliography

- The Torretta Flyer: Total Missions flown by the 484th Bomb Group From the Torretta Flyer #23.
 American Legion Magazine: What Became of the Big Bombers, Reprinted by permission of 1979.
 Mission Record, by Vincent O'Shea.
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 Willow Run, by Warren Benjamin Kidder.
 Colossus of American Industry 1995, by Frederick A. Johnsen.
 B-24 Liberator, Combat and Development History of the Libera tor and Privateer 1993, by Alwyn T. Lloyd.
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 484th Bomb Group Association, Torretta Flyers
 Diary 1945, Allan Davidson

Numbered Notes: These apply to Toggle Annie's missions

- 1) Information on these missions missing in the National Archives files.
- 2) Bombs returned to base. Mission credit given.
- 3) Co-pilot severely injured by flak and flew no more missions.
- 4) Early return. No mission credit.
- 5) Severe battle damage. Landed on Corsica.
- 6) Aircraft failure. Abort. no mission credit.
- 7) No mission listed this date.
- 8) Loaned to 824th Squadron.
- 9) Blew #2 cylinder head on takeoff. Abort. No mission credit.
- 10) Loaned to 827th Squadron.
- 11) Landed at Zara.
- 12) Toggle Annie's 100th Mission!

Toggle Annie's Missions

AR. TF	Date	Target
62 62	8-6-44	Miramas, France 5
70 70	8-17-44	Polesti,Rumania
72 72	8-20-44	Szolnok,Hungary