

AN APPRECIATION FROM A BOMBER CREWMAN

The following narration by Bill Overbeck originated with a discussion I had with Bill at the Eighth Air Force re-union in Los Angeles, in October, 1984. Bill had been a B-24 pilot in the 8th, and asked if I might be able to run down the identity of a 357th Mustang pilot, whose flight had provided close escort to his battle damaged Liberator. Bill remembered the name MISS FLORIDA, and the squadron code G4-Y on the flight leaders P-51. Upon return home, I dug thru my 357th records and decided that the pilot had probably been Jim Badger. Further correspondence with Bill produced the following narrative of the YOXFORD BOYS, from the viewpoint of a bomber crew. James Badger's whereabouts are unknown as he is not on our roster. If any of the other three members of Badger's flight read this, and recall the incident on 19 July, 1944, we would be pleased to hear from them.

MERLE C. OLMSTED

A DOUBLE SAVE FOR THE YOXFORD BOYS

BY

WILLIAM M. OVERBECK

The run to Saarbrücken on 19 July, 1944, was the last of six in B-24s for Lt. Lon Butts and his crew with the Sudbury-based 486th Bomb Group. This group was transitioning to B-17s, and we were not yet aware that we would be among several crews soon to be transferred to the 493rd at Ipswich. As we approached the target in the tail-end-charlie position behind the low-low squadron, our Liberator took several flak hits - a rather common occurrence in this vulnerable spot. I was checking the crew by intercom for reports of injuries and extent of battle damage. Everyone was O.K, but the tail was well ventilated. Suddenly we lost power on Nos 3 and 4. With six 1,000 pound bombs still hanging in the shackles, the B-24 dropped like an anvil from 24,000 to 18,000.

In the face of dire threats, navigator Lt. Ed Kurpieski stopped looking for a target of opportunity and jettisoned the heavy load. This gave us a fighting chance to adjust power and slow our rate of descent considerably. While I handled the engines, Butts called for Little Friends, and we were assured that they had us in sight.

As we trimmed the ship and fought for every foot of altitude, we noticed another B-24 with the square "O" of the 486th passing us on the right, and pulling away from us. This plane evidently had most of its power, and the bombardier was manually releasing the bombs at whatever target he could spot from the catwalk. Until now we had been too busy to realize that no fighters were in sight. The crew began to get nervous at the thought of our crippled condition, and the possibility that our fighters may be escorting other cripples in a different sector. There can't be a much lonelier feeling than that of limping along deep in enemy territory at half-power, with no friendly sight in sight. Butts called again for reassurance that the escort had us in sight, and four of the prettiest P-51s dropped out of the sun, streaked past, and hurtled back to their vantage point. During the brief glimpse, we noted that the