

1
CREW B-28
RAPID CITY ARMY AIR BASE
RAPID CITY, SD
1944

This is a short history of crew B-28 that was assembled in March or April 1944 at the Rapid City Army Air Force Base in Rapid City SD Listed below are the members of the crew as listed on the special orders of June 14, 1944 transferring us from Rapid City to Kearney, Neb.

Crew B-28

2nd Lt. (1024)	Severson, Donald G.	0819330	PILOT (Deceased)
2nd Lt. (1022)	Halstead, Harold H.	0768083	CO-PILOT
2nd Lt. (1035)	Hurst, Irving E. Jr.	0772035	BOMBARDIER (Deceased)
2nd Lt. (0718)	Gregory, James B.	0719932	NAVIGATOR
Sgt. (748)	Kelley, James A. Jr.	33524698	ENGINEER, TT GUNNER
Sgt. (757)	Miguet, Robert F.	20532859	RADIO
Sgt. (757)	Massinello, Michael	32463664	BALL TURRET GUNNER (Deceased)
Cpl. (611)	Livoti, Leonard C.	32781523	WAIST GUNNER (Deceased)
Cpl. (611)	Muscarnera, Cusimino C.	32878025	WAIST GUNNER (Unknowen)
Cpl. (611)	Yursky, Edward H.	13084394	TAIL GUNNER

The following are things that I, Jim Kelley, Engineer/Top Turret Gunner of Crew B-28 remember on this day in mid June 1998. Any correction or additions from any of the crewmembers will be appreciated and necessary changes will be made.

Our crew came from California to New York and from North Dakota to Virginia. Swede Severson our pilot came from Boyceville, Wisconsin; Hal Halstead our co-pilot was from Beach, South Dakota. Jim Gregory our navigator was from Alhambra, California. Irv Hurst our bombardier who was the only married member of the crew at this time was from Syracuse, New York. Jim Kelley our engineer/ top turret gunner was from Ellerson, Virginia. Bob Miguet our radio operator was from Evansville, Indiana. Mike Massinello our ball turret gunner was from Paterson, New Jersey. Lennie Livoti our waist gunner was from Brooklyn, New York. Ed Yursky, our tail gunner was from Johnstown Pennsylvania. The tenth member of our crew was Carl Muscarnera, a waist gunner from New York who was dropped from our crew after we were assigned to the 95th Bomb Group when all crews were reduced from ten to nine members. Carl remained with the 95th BG as a member of the group's band (or so we have been told) for the rest of the war.

The Jim Kelley Story

A brief tale of my army life is as follows. I was inducted into the army as a draftee on February 4, 1943 in Richmond, VA and was sent to Fort Lee, VA. I was assigned to the USAAC. I was sent to Miami Beach, Fla. for basic training. In April I was sent to Fort Myers, Fla. for aircraft gunnery training. In mid May after completing the gunnery training, a group of us were sent to Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas for aircraft mechanic training. We were trained on B-25's and B-26's. These were twin

engines planes nothing like the four engine B-17's in which we flew. In late November 1943, upon completing training at Sheppard Field, I was given a ten day delay in route and was to report to Salt Lake City for crew assignment. This was the only time while I was in service that I was at home until I returned from overseas. In February 1944 I was sent to Rapid City, SD for crew assignment.

I don't remember when or how I first met all the members of the crew but I do have a copy of the order putting the enlisted men on flying status as of 17 April 1944. Swede and I and maybe some of the crew flew check out flights on 13, 14 and 16 of April. I remember the first two flights very well as I became air sick on both of them and upon landing, I had to wash out the bomb bay both times. Swede had a talk with me and told me that if I got airsick the next time we flew, he was going to recommend that I be grounded. I don't know whether I was lucky or unlucky but I never was airsick after that. I reckon that I was lucky as I am still here.

The following information I have taken from my original flight records that had sent to my Mother along with my other personal effects after we were shot down. In April 1944 we flew nine missions for a total of forty -one hours and fifteen minutes and made eighteen landings, this includes the three checkout missions flown before April 17. In May we flew fourteen missions, for a total of fifty-four hours and fifteen minutes, and made eighteen landings. In June we flew four missions, eighteen hours and thirty minutes and made four landings. While in crew training we flew a total of twenty-seven missions for a total of one hundred and fourteen hours and made a total of forty landings. Included in these totals were twenty-one hours of instrument flying. Our flights varied in time from one of one hour to one of five hours and twenty-five minutes. We made sixteen flights in B-17 F's and eleven in B-17 G's.

I remember two of our flights more than the rest. One of them was the night flight when we were forced down at Miles City, Montana because of radio problems and the other was the one where we saw the smoke from a crash that had killed all of the crew that was on it. The reason I remember this was because we had flown this relatively new plane a few days before and Swede had problems flying it and reported it and the plane had been completely checked and was reported to be in flying condition.

After completing training at Rapid City, we were sent to Kearney, Nebraska where we picked up a brand new B17 G for our flight overseas. On June 24, 1944, Swede, Jim Gregory and I and maybe the rest of the crew flew a check out flight of two hours (from my Individual flight record) mainly to calibrate instruments with an instructor pilot. Jim G. says he remembers making runs up and down the Platte River until the crew complained that they were getting airsick.

On June 26, 1944 after being issued survival equipment including a 45 cal. pistol, we started our trip overseas. Two things I remember about this flight, one was seeing Chicago from the air and the second was that we buzzed Irv home in Syracuse, N.Y. I don't remember how low we flew but Sally, Irv wife told us at the POW National Convention in Jackson, Miss. in 1986(?) that the house literally shook. The flight from Kearney to New Hampshire (or Vermont) took a total of ten hours. On June 28 we flew to Gander Point, Newfoundland in six hours.

Gander Point was in the middle of nowhere. I do remember playing poker at 11:00 PM by sunlight, and putting blankets over the windows in the hanger where we stayed so we could try to sleep. I also remember the thick under growth in the surrounding area. I remember that a lot of planes were parked all over the air base. I recall seeing some twin engine A26's which I had never seen before. They were

waiting like we were for a tail wind that would make our flight overseas possible. Jim Gregory remembers giving a flight of three A26's that had homed on us, a heading to Iceland when we were about half way across the Atlantic. Our plane was fitted with a bomb bay tank on one side and we had pick up sacks of mail in New Hampshire in the other.

Finally on the third of July 1944 we departed from Gander Point for Nutts Corner, Ireland. It was an uneventful flight except for a couple of things. One of these was that we were flying alone and it was Jim Gregory's job to get us to our destination. The big problem was that Jim had very few chances to shoot the stars, as we flew between an over cast and under cast most of the way. One of my duties was to record the gasoline in each tank every one/half hour. When we arrive close to where we were headed, the ground was completely covered by a heavy overcast. I took a gas reading about a half an hour before we were supposed to land and told Swede that our gas supply was really getting low. Swede then radioed the air base that we were very low on gas and he was told that there was a break in the clouds near by and how to get there. Sure enough there was an opening where he had been told and when we descended I saw what I think was one of the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. The fields were green of varying shades unfolding in squares as if some one had painted them. Jim Gregory remembers shooting one or two landings and being waved off by red flares from the ground and we were so low that because of our speed we couldn't identify the landmarks. He told Swede to get in any way he could. Thankfully, someone popped on the radio that they saw us and to come in. We had finally found the correct field at Nutts Corner, Ireland. We landed on the fourth of July 1944. Some of the crew went into Dublin (?) that night to celebrate, but I had a headache and remained at the base. It was a good thing for a couple of our tanks were empty and we could not have flown much further. So without Jim Gregory's navigating skills, we might not have had the chance to become POW's. Our flight over the Atlantic Ocean was of eleven hours and twenty-five minutes duration, our crew's longest flight. It took a little over eleven days for my return to the USA aboard the hospital ship, The USS Argentina in June 1945.

While reading my flight record I discovered that we had been assigned to the 336th Bomb Squadron, 95th Bomb Group, 3rd Bomb Division (Wing) of the 8th Air Force before we left Kearney, Neb. I could find no record of the plane's number and I wonder if the plane had also been assigned to the 95th Bomb Group.

We landed at Nutts Corner, Ireland on July 5, 1944. Most of the crew went into Dublin that night but I had a headache and remained at the airfield. Upon landing we were relieved of our new plane and our survival equipment including our pistol, never to see any of them again.

We crossed over to Scotland on a ferry and we went to a transition camp. Some or all of the enlisted men were sent to 'The Wash' on the eastern coast of England for a refresher course in gunnery training. The thing I remember most about being there was the late afternoon flight of the British's bombers flying over us on their way to their targets for that night. It was like an endless line of them. When we returned to the transition camp we were sent to the 95th's base near Horam in late July or early August.

I do not remember too much about the base but I do remember it was really spread out. I bought myself a bicycle to ride about the base. It took a couple of tumbles before I got used to the front wheel brakes. I remember riding out to the field a couple of times to watch the plane return from their mission. I have often wondered what happened to my bike after we were shot down. I did not leave the base before we flew our first mission.

We began to wonder when we were going to fly our first mission. On August 9, 1944 Swede and I and some of the crew flew a training mission of two hours over the area to learn the landmarks that were there. The only thing I remember about the flight was being told that the barrage balloons we could see in the distant were near London. During this time our navigator disappeared for a few days and were we surprised upon his return to learn that he been chosen to fly with another crew on a shuttle mission to Russia. He received credit for four missions while on the shuttle flight. He ended up with five and one half missions while the rest of us had only one and one half. One other thing I remember while at the base was hearing a couple of the German's putt-putt bomb flying near our base, one exploding near by.

In the official records of the 95th Bomb Group our crew number was S-22. Severson was our pilot and he must have been the 22nd pilot with a name beginning with an S.

Finally on the night of August 14, 1944 about 11:00 PM, as Mike and I were in a poker game, one of the crew came into the Quonset hut where we were playing and told us that our crew was scheduled to fly a mission the next day. The game immediately broke up and we went to bed. I know that I did not sleep a wink that night but it seemed that morning of August 15 would never arrive. We were waken (those that were asleep) and went to breakfast and then to the briefing room. Our target was an airfield in France (?). This was the day of the southern invasion of France by the Allies. Our mission was five hours and thirty minutes long. It was very uneventful and we only saw a few burst of flak in the distance

When we returned to the base we figured we would get the next day off. About 10:00 PM we checked the bulletin board and found that we were to fly our second mission the next day. In early morning on August 16, 1944 we reported to the briefing room on the most eventful day of our lives up to then. Little did we know or little did we suspect of how the events of that day would affect us the rest of our lives. In the briefing room we were told our target was a synthetic oil plant in Zeitz, near Lepzig, Germany. We flew across Holland and parts of Germany on our way to the target. We saw some flak and maybe some enemy fighter at a distance. We had fighter escort all the way to the target.

When we arrived at the I P and entered the bombing run, I was in my upper turret and when I looked to the front of the plane all I could see was the black smoke and orange flame of bursting flak. I put my turret in a stowed position and climbed down and stood between Swede and Hal. I just could not see how any plane could get through that barrage. Right before bombs away we took a direct hit in number two engine, but luckily the shell did not explode because if it had this would never have been written. Swede feathered the number two engine. We were hit a couple more times but no more direct hits. The plane upon losing power of the engine veered to the left and out of the formation. The bomb bay doors would not open so Irv went back to the bomb bay and kicked open the doors and jettisoned the bombs. Swede then told Jim G. to plot a course to Switzerland.

Shortly after this, number three engine caught fire. Swede put the plane in a dive to try to put out the fire. But when number four engine began throwing oil Swede gave the order to bail out. We had a small problem in the cockpit, I handed Swede his parachute but when I reached for Hal 's I could not find it, but after a few seconds I founded out I had put on his and I reached back and gave him mine.

We all landed OK but a civilian shot Bob in the leg, with a shotgun. We did not know what happened to him until we waiting at Camp Lucky Strike on our way home. We were very happy to find out he

was alive. A civilian shot Jim G in the hip with a pistol. All of the crew with the exception of Eddie who joined us a couple days later and Bob who we did not hear from until at Lucky Strike, were united in that afternoon in a small village courthouse in Camburg, Germany. Gregory and Halstead both have visited Camburg in the late 1980's and have sent the crew members copies of pictures they took while there. I also have pictures sent me by both of them of the house in the village of Molau, Germany into which our plane crashed. It had been rebuilt.

After a few days we were sent to Frankfurt, Germany and put in solitary confinement for a few days and then interrogated, after which we were sent to Duglag Luft at Wetzler for assignment to prison camps. I think all the officers were sent to StaLag Luft III. The enlisted men were sent to a new Camp at St. Wendel, Germany that was near Nancy, France. We only stayed there a couple of weeks before we were put in forty and eight box cars and shipped clear across Germany to StaLag Luft IV at Gros Tychow which is now in Poland.

Eddie ended up in Lager D. Lennie, Mike and I ended up in Lager C, Barrack 3, room 13. We stayed here until February 6, 1945 when the Germans were forced to evacuate the camp by the approaching Russians. We were on the 'Black March' for almost ninety days. A unit of the British Second Army liberated me on May 2, 1945. I was flown out of Germany and was in Brussels at the headquarters of the British second army on VE Day, May 8, 1945. We were turned over to the Americans in Namur, Belgium around May 10, 1945. From there we were sent to Camp Lucky Strike at La Harve, France to await transportation back to the states.

Our ship landed us in Boston on June 8, 1945. The next day I was sent to Fort Meade, Md. After a couple of days I was given a 60 day furlough. After the furlough we reported to Miami Beach Fla. From there I was transferred to Greensboro NC and I received my discharge there on October 27, 1945

Thus ended my military career.

From this time to the middle 1980, I had no direct contact with any of the crewmembers, until on a National POW Day in Washington, DC when my wife, Margaret and I ran into Eddie and Agnes Yursky. Eddie and Agnes were married while he was on his 60 day leave in 1945. I met Agnes while in Miami Beach. On a Saturday afternoon in the middle April 1985, I received a telephone call from Jim Gregory, the Navigator of our crew who I had not seen or talked to for about forty years. Between he and the Co-Pilot I think they located the rest of the crew except Swede Severson, our pilot who we later found out had remained in the service and had been killed in Alaska in 1954 in a plane crash.

Hal Halstead, Jim Gregory, Eddie Yursky, Lennie Livoti, and Mike Massinello got together in the fall of 1985 at the POW National Convention. Hal Halstead made a videotape of each crewmember's 'Bail Out Story' and sent a copy to each of us. I regret very much that I did not attend this convention as Mike died soon after attending. He did call me shortly after he got home and I really enjoyed talking to him.

In 1986 at the POW National Convention held in Jackson Mississippi, all the remaining crewmembers Hal Halstead, Jim and Dorothy Gregory, Irv and Sally Hurst, Bob and Helen Miguet, Lennie and Anne Livoti, Eddie and Agnes Yursky, and Jim and Margaret Kelley attended. Halstead made a videotape of all the ones that had not been recorded the year before. All had a good time.

Our next get together was in Savannah, Ga. in September 1996 at the 95th Bomb Group's Reunion.

Present were Hal and Marie Halstead, Jim and Dorothy Gregory, Lennie and Anne Livoti, Eddie and Agnes Yursky and Jim and Margaret Kelley. Irv Hurst had pass away before this get together, shortly after playing golf with Eddie Yursky.

According to my "Individual Flight Records" from April 1944 to August 16, 1944 our total flight time was one hundred fifty one hours and fifty-five minutes. We did not receive any hours for our mission on August 16,1944. I think we should have at least 6,192 hours as that final mission lasted about 258 days.