



## In This Issue of Saving Military History One Soldier at a Time



As we say goodbye and good riddance to 2020 we do have to thank some special people from last year. First, we want to thank all of our volunteers that have contributed to our transcription project. This has grown our database of history and servicemen honor roll. Second, for all of you that spent many months cleaning your homes and deciding to entrust us with the artifacts of your family's military history we thank you for sharing your family with us and our many followers.

However, because of COVID we were not out in the public where we make our money through appearance and monetary donations. We are feeling the impact of this loss of revenue in our operations and we hope for a turnaround during 2021. But our commitment to the mission and our slogan has not changed.

On a positive note, we launched our new online cinema late in the year and look forward to exploring ways to use it to bring programs to the public. It is also our hope that in the near future we can resume our programs at schools and other civic events.

This first newsletter of 2021 has a lot of expanded stories and history and depending upon feedback we hope to continue with some of this material throughout the year. The first new section to the newsletter entitled "The Ultimate Sacrifice" is where we highlight a killed-in-action patriot and their artifacts in our collection. The first honored and remembered is Lt. John Melcher. The second, "Missing In Action & Buried Unknowns" highlights a current status Missing in Action. Stories and donation artifacts continue to be highlighted.

So enjoy the first issue of 2021 and a Happy New Year to you and your families.

**Thank you for your support!**

**[Donate Now!](#)**

***We tell history! Saving Military History One Soldier at a Time.***

Remember those that made the #ultimatesacrifice #mia #pow #kia #sonsofliberty. #patriots #army #navy #marines #aircorps #airforce #coastguard #merchantmarine; all those that have worn the cloth.

Join us on this journey.

In Their Memory,  
Robert Coalter, Jason Weigler  
Executive Directors

"Saving Military History One Soldier At A Time"<sup>SM</sup>  
"Saving History One Soldier At A Time"<sup>SM</sup>

Visit Sons of Liberty Website

Visit Army Air Corps Library and Museum Website

## The Ultimate Sacrifice



### 2nd Lieutenant John W. Melcher

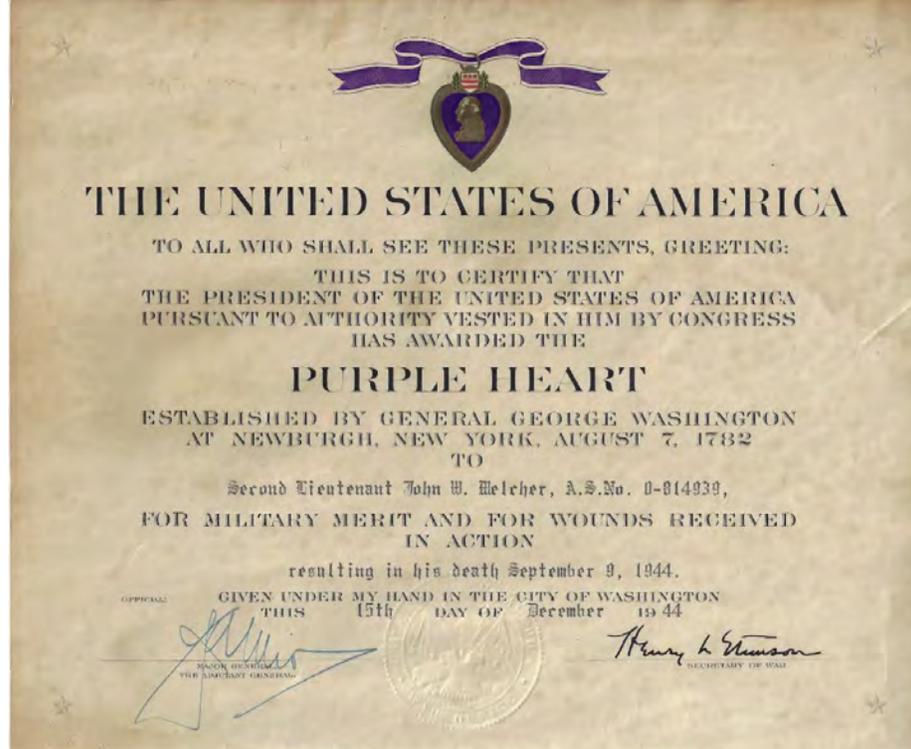
Killed in Action - 9/9/1944

B-26 Pilot  
432nd Bomb Squadron  
17th Bombardment Group  
12th Air Force

We are honored with the recently donated artifacts enable us to preserve and tell the story of John Melcher and his crew. (More in our next newsletter).

#killedinaction #ultimatesacrifice





## Missing in Action & Buried Unknowns



There are still thousands classified as Missing in Action or as Buried Unknowns. In our partnership with the MIA Recovery Network we have established data on our websites regarding MIAs. We are in the process of cataloging research materials instrumental to the researcher and families in this search. The quest to account for those of our nation's Missing in Action is one of the most noble of endeavors. There are also a large number of recovered remains that are buried in ABMC cemeteries where the identity is unknown.

The recovery of MIAs pose a number of challenges. For example, Navy or Merchant Marine ships that were sunk in are unrecoverable and thus ship manifests are the primary and often only source of names for those that have perished but are still accounted for as Missing In Action.

Each conflict has had its own challenges. At the end of World War II the military had established more than 360 temporary cemeteries, but the dead were being found continually, in farm fields, forests, small church cemeteries, and isolated graves and the shores of combat zones. These dead were collected and the remains consolidated into the fourteen permanent European, Mediterranean, and North African Cemeteries maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission, and two permanent cemeteries in the Philippines and Hawaii.

**Frederick W. Goempel**  
**Private, US Army**  
**F Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division**  
**MIA: 9 February 1945**

In early February of 1945, US Army divisions occupied a broad 25-mile front on the western side of the Sauer River in Luxembourg. The Sauer formed the border between

Luxembourg and Germany, and General George S. Patton had ordered a military maneuver known as a forced river crossing. Forced crossings occur when the units in pursuit of the enemy cannot continue the pursuit in normal order, but must stop, prepare a “forced” crossing with special equipment, and usually in the face of strong defenses. This crossing was to be especially difficult. The Sauer, normally a placid stream that was narrow and shallow, could be easily crossed in normal weather. In February of 1945 however, the weather would hinder the pursuers as they attempted the crossing. The winter snowfall experienced by the besieged 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in Bastogne had melted. Now, the Sauer raged with a 12 mile per hour current, deep and wide. Temperatures were freezing or slightly above. The Germans occupied high ground on the bank facing the Americans, and the area bristled with tanks and fixed concrete bunkers. The equipment to be used by the Americans was not of the best quality. Heavy plywood boats with no engines were all that were available. And these were to be paddled across the strong current, filled with soldiers loaded down with rifles and ammunition, wearing packs, winter clothing and heavy boots.

Frederick Goempel joined F Company of the 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry approximately 5 days before 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion attempted the river crossing. An infantry replacement, he had entered the front with hundreds of other replacements for the wounded and dead of the battles the US Army was fighting as they approached the border of Germany. On the night of 6-7 February 1945, the men of 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion prepared to cross the raging Sauer approximately 2 miles north of the town of Echternach, Luxembourg. Combat engineers had placed several wooden boats at a tree line close to the river. The plan was for the engineers to support the crossing by going over with the infantry, so that they could return the boats for further use. In the first attempt, enemy fire was heavy, and the swift current took several boats and the men inside either down the river out of control, or the boats were struck by enemy fire and lost. Only one squad of men was able to make the crossing and establish a tenuous bridgehead on the German side. This intrepid group of eight men was stranded under enemy fire for nearly a day before two of their Captains made it across and evacuated the squad. Crossing attempts and plans continued, and artillery fire pounded the German positions across the Sauer, assisted by chemical mortars to lay down a smoke screen in the hopes of destroying the German’s ability to observe the crossing. By the evening of 8-9 February, the Second Battalion had succeeded in crossing many of the unit and had begun to advance to an elevated area on the German shore known as Hill 183, which was a key objective.

Once the bridgehead was secure and expanded, units regrouped and began supply and support operations. Head counts were made, and wounded were brought to an aid station west of the town of Echternach, perhaps a mile from the river crossing. The dead were collected, and attempts were made at identification. Frederick Goempel was not at the bridgehead, nor was he found among the dead and wounded at the aid station. He was reported as missing. There were no reports of him being taken prisoner by the Germans. There were few men who knew Frederick or who made his acquaintance before the crossing. Unlike many of the dead, his family received none of his personal effects, either from his equipment left behind at the battalion storage point or on his person. He was simply missing. There were two people who thought that they knew what might have happened to Frederick. One of them thinks that someone resembling Frederick stepped on a mine as the assault team landed on the far bank and was obliterated by the explosion. This man did not know Frederick but described someone remarkably similar in appearance to him. Another man, who did know Frederick, contends that he was shot while crossing the river and drowned. There is no documentary evidence to support either of those claims.

Quartermaster Corps Graves Registration units began to search the Sauer above and below Echternach and on both sides of the river immediately after combat operations and continued their work until the late 1940’s in the area. Dozens of men had been lost in the crossing attempts across the front occupied by several US divisions, and the bodies of many of these men were found in both the river and on the German side. Some were found as late as the early 1950’s.

When these teams began a search, they used unit reports from the various combat elements to try to discern where to begin their efforts. In the case of Frederick Goempel, inexplicably, they began their search not 2 miles north of Echternach where the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment’s battalions are known to have crossed, but about twelve miles south of the crossing point above the town. The coordinates provided them by the Army Map Service somehow placed Goempel as “last seen” far below the actual crossing point. This meant

that whatever dental charts or physical characteristics of Frederick Goempel would be compared to dozens of recovered bodies that belonged to the dead of the division flanking the 5<sup>th</sup> on the right, and 10 miles below the 5<sup>th</sup>'s crossing site. It is highly unlikely that had Frederick Goempel drowned in the river, his body could be found twelve miles south of the crossing. The Sauer is shallow, and normally a placid stream. It twists and turns a great deal in the twelve miles from the crossing point. Dozens of bodies were found in the shallow banks along the river and many of these were identified as being from the units to the south of Echternach.

Contacted by a Goempel family member, Col. Jim Tonge and I began to look at the available records of the crossing provided by her. She had done a remarkable job at collecting information relating to the crossing and had talked with two of the men who believed they knew Frederick's fate. She too had wondered at the strange starting point for the search for Frederick Goempel. None of us have since been able to explain why this location was selected. In addition to the witnesses, she had collected combat maps with exact placement of the German and American positions on both sides of the river and unit histories. Karl von Clausewitz, the great Prussian general and philosopher of war, talks of the "fog of war" in combat. The fog of war is not dispelled by the cessation of combat. The battlefield is a fluid and violent place. Records are understandably difficult to maintain to exacting standards, especially at the squad level under combat conditions. In the Goempel case, we are sure of only one thing as a result of investigating the available records. That is that by looking twelve miles south of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion crossing point, we would not find Private Goempel. He remains missing.

Excerpted from:

"Known But to God; America's 20<sup>th</sup> Century Wars and the Search to Recover the Missing."

Due out in mid-2021.

## The New Cinema



In November 2020 we launched our own virtual cinema. Another way to describe it is it's our own Netflix.

We have started out with 130 combat films represented by 209 clips and 1436 minutes of footage.

We will continue to add to the cinema as we have a lot of material and we will be generating much more for you to see.

**This is a subscription service of \$14.95/month.**

Take a few minutes and go see what's "Now Showing" and decide if you want to sign up and start watching. [Go now !](#)

[Sons of Liberty Virtual Cinema](#)

## Sons of Liberty Museum

The Sons of Liberty has hundreds



of uniforms and thousands of other artifacts in our collection from the U.S. Civil War to Present day. Our web presence now numbers in excess of 325,000 pages. We continue to accept new material for education and research programs; a number of these items will make their way on to the website. Our collection includes memorabilia from the front line soldier to the rear echelon clerk. Drivers, infantrymen, pilots, tankers, seaman, medical, artillery,

armorers, engineers, quartermasters and much more. Those that were drafted or volunteered; those that did a single tour or made it a career. Those that returned with all types of injuries and those that gave their full measure being killed in action (KIA). All MOS are welcome from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard and Marines. We are Saving Military History One Soldier At A Time. We are honoring the service of the Citizen Soldier.

#sonsofliberty

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## Oscar T. Lang

18 April 1896 - 15 May 1972

This Purple Heart manufactured by Bailey, Banks & Biddle was awarded to Private Oscar T. Lang for injuries in World War I.

Company E  
354th Infantry Regiment  
89th Infantry Division

Campaigns: St. Mihiel & Meuse-Argonne

Buried: Fort Bliss National Cemetery, El Paso Texas





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## Volunteers

We need volunteers to transcribe award and roster documents. You will place the material into a spreadsheet where it will be added to our database and website. We welcome new dedicated volunteers to work from home and help us with this project!

## Interesting Links & Resources

Researching History: <https://www.sonsoflibertymuseum.org/military-history-records.cfm>

Honor Roll: <https://www.sonsoflibertymuseum.org/honor.cfm>

## Donations

We welcome donations of papers, books, photos, gear, uniforms, jackets, medals, ribbons, weapons, equipment, scrapbooks, biographies, diaries and more. Please [Contact Us](#)

Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert

Storm, Cold War, Gulf War and current conflict donations accepted. From small to large multi-item donations, they all tell a story.

We need you ! We need your help to further our mission of preserving and bringing this history to you and your families. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit your qualifying donations are tax deductible.



## Army Air Corps Museum

The Air Corps Museum online presence encompasses over 225,000 web pages with thousands of photos and other materials. Our artifact collection contains hundreds of uniforms, albums, logs, medals and more from the Army Air Service, Army Air Forces and U.S. Air Force.

World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Cold War, Gulf War and current conflict donations welcome!

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### Interesting Links & Resources

Trace a Family Members Military

Service: <https://www.armyaircorpsmuseum.org/veteran-research.cfm>

Honor Roll: [https://www.armyaircorpsmuseum.org/honor\\_roll.cfm](https://www.armyaircorpsmuseum.org/honor_roll.cfm)

### Donations

We welcome donations of papers, books, photos, gear, uniforms, jackets, medals, ribbons, weapons, equipment, scrapbooks, biographies, diaries, letters and more. Please [Contact Us](#)

You can make monetary donations through the following links. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit your qualifying donations are tax deductible.

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**What's this strange  
plane with a US flag  
painted on the  
fuselage?**

**It appears a  
serviceman is  
hidden in the hatch.**

Read the story ....



### **Messerschmitt Mission of Mercy: the Strange Tale of Operation Gunn**

*By Thomas Laemlein*

In August 1943, the USAAF's 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force began the critical strategic bombing campaign against the German oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. These highly successful missions were carried out at low-level, and at the maximum range of the B-24 bombers. Between April 5, 1944 and August 19, 1944, the 15th Air Force heavy bombers targeted Ploesti nineteen times. Accurate bombing reduced production by almost 80 percent, crippling the Reich's vital petroleum resources. But the cost of the air offensive was high, with 223 bombers shot down along with several escort fighters, resulting in more than 1,100 USAAF air crews becoming prisoners of war in Romania.

On August 17, 1944, the Fifteenth Air Force sent 248 Liberators to hit Ploesti. Lt. Colonel James A. Gunn, commanding officer of the 454th Bomb Group, led the B-24s of his unit during that strike. On the run in to the target, four aircraft in the lead squadron were shot down by flak. Gunn and most of his crew parachuted out safely and were quickly captured by Romanian troops. Since Gunn and his crew were captured by Romanians, they were sent to Romanian prison camps in accordance with the existing agreement between German and Romanian forces. Gunn was sent to the officer's prison in Bucharest, where he was the senior officer among the POWs held there. Gunn was interrogated but was not harmed by Romanian officials. However, conditions at the officers' prison were deplorable.

At about the same time, Soviet ground forces were pressing into Romania from the north. On August 23, 1944, Romania's King Michael gave in to the extreme pressure exerted by the Red Army, and surrendered to the Soviet Union. Panic gripped the country in anticipation of the brutality of Soviet occupation. The Germans, angered by their former ally's surrender, began a series of reprisal bombing raids against Bucharest and other Romanian cities.

With news of their country's surrender, the Romanian prison guards deserted their posts, leaving the gates open. Gunn worked to keep the other POWs from leaving the prison and vanishing into the surrounding countryside until arrangements could be made for their safe return home. It proved difficult to find anyone with the authority to make such arrangements.

Gunn finally located senior Romanian officials who agreed to move the American POWs to a safer location outside the city, and to fly Gunn to Italy where he could work with Allied officials to arrange for the evacuation of the prisoners. In return for their help, Gunn agreed to have 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force units attack German airfields in Romania to eliminate the bombing threat to Bucharest. The Romanians also requested that their country be occupied by either the British or the Americans, but this was far beyond the scope of Gunn's authority, and outside the realm of any realistic possibility.

Gunn's original flight to Italy was planned in a twin-engine aircraft, but only minutes after take-off the Romanian pilot turned back, claiming engine trouble. Back at the Romanian airfield, Gunn was approached by Captain Constantine Cantacuzino, who offered to fly him to Italy in the belly of his Messerschmitt Bf109G. Captain Cantacuzino was a leading Romanian fighter ace and fighter group commander that had been flying bomber interception missions in cooperation with the Luftwaffe. Gunn agreed, despite the particularly dangerous nature of this mission, given the fact that he would be trapped in the fuselage of a small, enemy aircraft flying into Allied territory, with no way to escape the Bf109 in case of trouble.

To make matters worse, there were no available maps of Italy to guide the Romanian pilot, so Gunn drew a map from memory of the southeastern Italian coast, as well as an approach chart for his 15<sup>th</sup> AF base at San Giovanni. Gunn recommended that they fly "on the deck" to avoid German radar interception, but his Romanian pilot preferred to fly at 15,000 feet, as he did not have great confidence in his aircraft's low-level capability. It was going to be a long, cold and cramped ride for Gunn, with no heat and little oxygen.

To prepare for the flight into Allied airspace, a large American flag was crudely painted on both sides of the fuselage. Also, early style US Army Air Corps stars were painted on the wings (including the red meatball in the center). Captain Cantacuzino feared that their plan had been discovered by Nazi agents and quickly produced flying gear for Gunn, who somehow squeezed himself through the 18-inch-square access door into the Bf109's fuselage (which had been the radio compartment). This strange mission of mercy began at about 5:30 PM on August 27, 1944, and remarkably the two-hour flight came off without any additional drama.

Gunn and Cantacuzino were taken to Fifteenth Air Force headquarters at Bari, where planning began immediately for bombing raids against the German airfield that threatened Bucharest. Plans for the evacuation of the POWs were also made, and B-17s were rapidly modified to serve as the transport planes. Appropriately, the plan was designated "Operation Gunn". Rescue flights began almost immediately and by September 3rd, a total of 1,161 American and British prisoners of war had been flown out of Romania. The incredible gamble had paid off, and with it came one of the most incredible stories of World War II.

Both pilots survived the war, Gunn returning to the USA and a successful business career. Captain Cantacuzino was not able to return to Romania, as the new communist regime had a price on his head. He emigrated to Spain after the war and passed away in 1958.

Below: Gunn and Cantacuzino.



We have rescued this website. It was available for many years. The creator passed in 2016 and the website disappeared. Fortunately, we had a copy of the site and have recreated it in his and all the other 32nd Squadron members memory. re-launched November 2020.

Read one of the stories you will find on the website below.

[Visit the 32ndBombSquadron.org](http://www.32ndBombSquadron.org)



## Frank C. McGinley's Last Mission

From His Journal

**THE LAST MISSION:** Wiener Neustadt, November 2nd 1943 in B-17 bomber number 23380, attacked by fighters and crashed. Crew: (P) Charles E. Mason, (CP) Frank C. McGinley, (N) Marcus S. Baker, (B) Anthony W. Rossi, (E) James P. Crockett Jr., (RO) Thomas W. Saucier, (BTG) Arthur H. Gillespie, (WG) Harold C. Roush, (TG) Edward R. Golebiewski. (Saucier, Gillespie and Golebiewski were killed in action and the rest became Prisoners of War). This was the 32nd mission for Bomber Number 23380 of the 32nd Bomb Squadron, 301st Bomb Group (H) Frank McGinley wrote the following while a POW (Prisoner of War) at Stalag Luft I, Barth, Germany from November 1943 until liberation by Russian troops at the end of the war in 1945. In the prolog to his journal, Frank McGinley dedicated his recollections to fallen comrades. He wrote, "This book and everything in it, it's memories, it's dreams, it's laughs, it's tears; is dedicated to my friends, my buddies in arms who have given their lives that me and mine may live...in peace!"

### "PURPLE HEART CORNER"

**IT ALL BEGAN ON NOVEMBER** 2nd 1943 on a lonely pitch black morning at 4:00 AM and I realized then, if never before, why they called it 'Darkest Africa'. The P.A. system was blaring forth the happy news, "breakfast is now being served for combat personnel briefing in 30 minutes", while in the more antiquated Squadron adjoining ours, the OD (Officer of the day) was feverishly blowing a whistle, in lieu of the P.A. system, at each tent whose occupants were slated for the day's festivities. I hastily got my equipment together, and I say hastily, because as usual, it was always the late Mr. McGinley. With the aid of my feeble flashlight, I groped my way to the Mess Tent to stuff myself on what the mad friends preceding me had left (two biscuits, jelly and coffee). And so to briefing which of necessity, and out of deference to the German Intelligence Officers, I must leave untouched. Suffice it to say it was an interesting and informative hour we put in before leaving on our little pleasure jaunt to Jerry land.

**AND SO, UP INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER,** and the big day, little did I know, was started! Everything went smoothly with the exception of the supercharger on the No.1 engine, but we figured with three other engines, we would have no trouble whatsoever getting there. I was having a final cigarette and singing "Oh, what a beautiful morning, Oh, what a beautiful day", prior to putting on my oxygen mask, when I noticed that my chute had popped open. I never gave a thought then to any serious developments on account of this, but I remember thinking what a ribbing I would take from the boys at the base when they heard about it. However, soon after I made this interesting discovery, the Navigator informed us that we were approaching our IP and my thoughts quickly turned to the more serious business ahead. We were flying in "Purple Heart Corner" so we had a pretty good view of the boys ahead going through the flak, or I should say, disappearing in the flak. The whole sky ahead was black, just as it was the last time we were up there. It seemed funny to see and yet satisfying, too, watching what appeared to be toy airplanes in a cloudless sky plunge headlong into that black mass, disappear for a time, and then to reappear on their "rally". It seemed to radiate confidence back to us exhibiting a modest pride in a good job

well done.

**ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS WITH REACHING THE IP** 'tracking flak' picked us up and began working its way toward us. Pilot Charles Mason had asked me at briefing earlier in the day to grab a couple of snapshots of anything worthwhile and with a start I remembered this and grabbed the camera. At almost the same moment, we spotted enemy fighters maneuvering into position, and hardly had I begun my call to the crew, when the Tail Gunner reported fighters attacking from 6 o'clock low and almost immediately he and the Ball turret opened fire, and the pounding of their guns sounded way up in the cockpit even over the roar of our engines, giving as good as was sent, as evidenced by the exultant crowd of victory as one of the fighters began smoking and started haphazardly spiraling down, out of the fight for keeps. Finishing their pass at the tail as is the custom of the Foche-Wolfe 190's, they channeled to the right, peeling down to make another pass and exposing only their heavily armored belly to the waist gunner in passing. His tracers were cutting a path to one of these fighters, so I lined him up in the camera sights all set to snap what would have been a swell shot, but at that instant, the ship on our right wing received a direct flak burst and almost immediately burst into flames and started down. I guess none of them ever knew what hit them, and I took the camera down and watched them for a moment with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach as I realized they were gone. I knew them all and now they were gone with nothing to mark the spot except a trail of oily smoke! I was jarred out of these thoughts, but definitely, when a flak shell burst below our right wing, throwing the ship violently upwards. The main point of damage was in the wing, directly behind No. 3 engine; as though some giant hand had torn a jagged section from the wing, and not satisfied with that, had furthered the destructive work by setting fire to it as well. No. 3 engine was completely knocked out and I remember thinking what a job we would have getting home with all the damage, while with half of my mind I realized it was only a question of time before the ship would blow up. I kept watching the fire, attempting to figure out how long we would last. Could we reach our target to drop our bombs, and would we be able to clear the target before we had to leave her?

**DURING THESE MOMENTS WHILE MY THOUGHTS WERE RACING ALL OVER THE PLACE**, all hell was breaking loose in the surrounding skies, and I found I was still automatically carrying out my job, setting the prop speed higher, giving our remaining engines all the juice they could take. Four fighters were still coming in, so I grabbed the camera and got a sweet shot as I had planned before, a Foche-Wolfe peeling away and down followed by the tracers from the Waist Gunner, only in the foreground I had focused on our own burning wing. I got one other shot of three Foche-Wolfe coming in from 4 o'clock high, when the Pilot called my attention from the business of calling out the fighters and taking pictures of the same. Our intercom phone had been shot out, so by gestures he informed me that these continued fighter attacks had destroyed our elevator controls and it took our combined strength to hold the ship straight and level for the bomb run. It was now more than ever a race with death to see if we could hang on until our bombs were away and we had gotten clear of the burning target areas before we bailed out.

**THE FIGHTERS WERE CHANGING THEIR TACTICS NOW**, varying their attack front and rear. The Tail Gunner was killed on one fighter pass and the quiet that settled over the ship told its own tragic story. Our Ball Turret Gunner had also gone to "Airman's Heaven", apparently killed instantly by the flak burst that so damaged our wing. Another flak burst, quite close, destroyed what was left of our aileron control and the A.F.C.E. mechanism too was not functioning. The cry of "Bombs Away" gave us mingled feelings of satisfaction, relief and regret. Relief that we had done our job well, but regret for at that clarion call, our last connection with our buddies was severed.

**THE GROUP RALLIED ON THEIR WAY HOME**, while we had no choice but to continue straight ahead, hoping to reach a safe place to bail out before the fire reached our gas tank. Almost as though a part of a pre-arranged plan, our exit cue was given by an off stage prompter in the personage of an unknown German fighter pilot. Our top turret gunner was very short in stature and to that fact alone, can he attribute his prolongation of life at that particular moment. One of his guns jammed, and being small, he had to duck down out of the turret to clear the jam. While thus engaged, a spray of lead perforated the cockpit, and a 20mm cannon shell burst in the turret, blowing it completely off the ship. It was almost laughable to see his eyes bulge out in surprise as he stuck his head out of what was left of his gun mount into the slipstream. Then, to add insult to injury, for the first time he noticed the wing burning; a tribute to his concentration on protecting the ship

from the fighters. When he spotted the fire he crawled out of his turret again and forcibly called the pilots' attention to the fire. Up to that time I firmly believe the fire was known only to the Bombardier and myself. He had noticed it while following the erratic flight of an Me109 he had shot down.

**THE ALARM BELL RANG** and the top turret gunner started toward the bomb bay preparatory to leaving the ship. By the time I got my chute picked up (or, so I thought) he had already attempted to open the bomb bay doors, and failed. He jumped into the bomb bay just as I came through the door and partially sprang it, and by kicking and squirming he got out, almost. The door slammed shut on him, just as he fell out, catching his left arm and part of his chute inside. Don't ask me why, but I automatically used my old bean for a change and jumped into the bomb bay and sprung the Engineer clear. It is fortunate for him that I did, for he told us later that the slipstream was banging him against the fuselage and seemed to be tearing his arm out of the socket as well as ripping his shroud lines. However, he was out now and that's what was the important thing. It was then, however, that I started to sweat because when I went back to again try to open the bomb bay doors, through the door came good old Lt. Mason with the rest of my chute. I hadn't known till then how badly caught my pilot chute was in the turret and seats. He very nicely handed me my chute, signaled 'thumbs up', pulled the bomb bay release (this time it worked), and out I went, the chute ballooning right in the bomb bay. What a feeling of relief when I swung clear of the ship. I then looked up at my pretty little chute and started my sweating all over again, because two complete panels of the chute were torn out, either in all that jumping around the bomb bay, or when the chute opened in the ship. I said my favorite little prayer, although I didn't do too good a job of it at the time. As I looked, the chute made an ominous ripping sound just once, and after that it was the most pleasant, peaceful grandstand seat any man could ever have for a real view of combat at its best or worst, depending on your point of view.

**I COULD SEE OUR SHIP, SMOKE AND FLAME STREAMING FROM IT**, majestically descending and Mason's chute billowing behind it. I could spot other chutes below me, and see fighters still attacking old "Pistol Packin Mama". One of them buzzed me, but did nothing more than start my chute gently oscillating. Off in the distance I could see our boys going home silhouetted against a sky darkened by the rolling clouds of smoke and flame emanating from the target area.

### **"CAPTURE"**

**I HIT THE GROUND AND HEADED FOR THE HILLS**, despite the fact that one of my boots dropped off when I bailed out. I climbed up and down hills for quite a while until the sounds of my pursuers increased. I burrowed in on the side of one of the hills in a nice thick protective screen of trees, covering up with dead leaves and branches to camouflage myself. I still had my Mae West with me figuring I could make some kind of covering out of it for my foot. I knew I couldn't go far with only one flying boot. While laying there sweating out detection, I opened my escape kit and distributed the various articles into my pockets for future use. The nearest I could figure out I was some 70 miles from Yugoslavia and about 150 miles from Tito's forces who were our Guerrilla Allies. Just then something happened that temporarily drove hope from me. The searching parties had narrowed their search down to my little hill and I could see them quite plainly from where I lay. Apparently my covering was working for they passed within 10 or 15 feet and it seemed they looked right through me. One of them had a dog that spotted me and came right up sniffing at my boot. His master thought he was after rabbits and, to my relief, called him and off they went on their way. I figured now I was all set and as soon as the sun went down I could start my trek to freedom.

Read the rest of McGinley's story.....

<https://www.32ndbombsquadron.org/frank-mcginleys-journal.html>

[Visit the 32ndBombSquadron.org Page](https://www.32ndbombsquadron.org)

And read more stories

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# Preserve This History, Honor the Service, Provide Education For Future Generations



Make a \$ Donation to the Army  
Air Corps Library and Museum

Thank You For Your Support !



Make a \$ Donation To the Sons  
of Liberty Museum

Thank You For Your Support !

---- What is Liberty ? ----

"definition. the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views."

Merriam-Webster defines it as " the power to do as one pleases, the freedom from physical restraint and freedom from arbitrary or despotic control.

---- So what is a Son of Liberty? ----

In our context and beginning these were the men and women in America who wanted the freedom from the King of England. They desired a right of self-determination for their lives. They fought for this liberty and codified it in the Constitution of a new country. To keep this liberty they created a military to ward off the any would-be belligerent. For 244 years the men and women who have worn the cloth of our nation's military are the Sons of Liberty. They have fought enemies in other nations, they have fought each other and they have stood as sentinels of the watch.

We celebrate the service of these individuals, we tell the historical story of these selfless patriots.

---- The Sons of Liberty Museum ----

Over a decade ago we chose a name for this organization and our sister the Army Air Corps Library and Museum. We believe these names accurately describe these men and women who serve. We will not change any name to satisfy a radical viewpoint or computer algorithm, we don't allow for any revisionist history, we tell the factual stories.

## Need a Good Book?

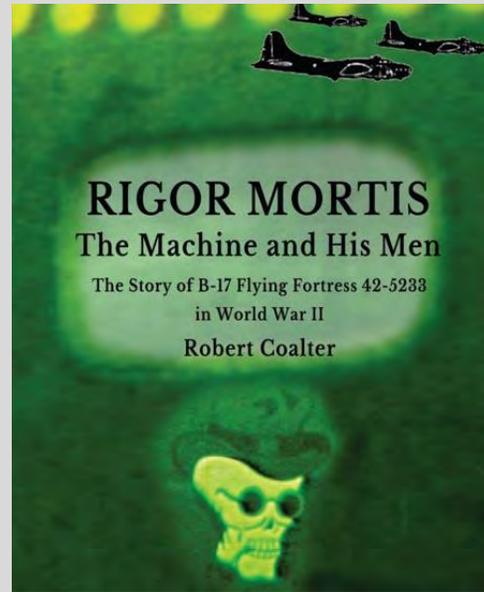
Check out these titles.



I was a navigator in the 459 Bomb Group 758 Bomb Squadron flying B-24's from Torre Giulia Field, tower named 'Coffee Tower', a gravel airfield near Cerignola, on the Foggia Plains of Southeastern Italy during the period August 4, 1944 to May 16, 1945. I flew 50 combat missions over targets in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and Northern Italy.

Project Option: 6×9 in, 15×23 cm  
# of Pages: 386  
IsbnSoftcover: 9781714032860  
Publish Date: Dec 12, 2019

**[Buy It \\$24.99](#)**



Most aircraft of World War II had pictures of sexy girls, tributes to sweethearts, songs and home. The planes were fondly referred to in a feminine manor. That was not the case with this B-17 tail number 42-25233. He was Rigor Mortis.

This is the story of Rigor Mortis and his men who flew over 120 missions from North Africa and Italy in 1943 and 1944.

Project Option: 8×10 in, 20×25 cm  
# of Pages: 382  
IsbnSoftcover: 9781714727803  
Publish Date: Apr 20, 2020

**[Buy It \\$29.95](#)**

## Surrender Not an Option

Survivors guilt is not the only thing that is bothering Allen Purvis. He has to relive in his mind the battles in a denied area when he was assigned to MACVSOG the ultimate secret organization during the Viet Nam war. He is put to the test when he commands his friends to sacrifice themselves to save the others of the unit. Wendy Salas, nurse at the 95th Evacuation Hospital sees the horrors of the war everyday. Her pain is personal. A chance meeting on R&R in Hong Kong brings these two people

# SURRENDER NOT AN OPTION

GENE H. PUGH



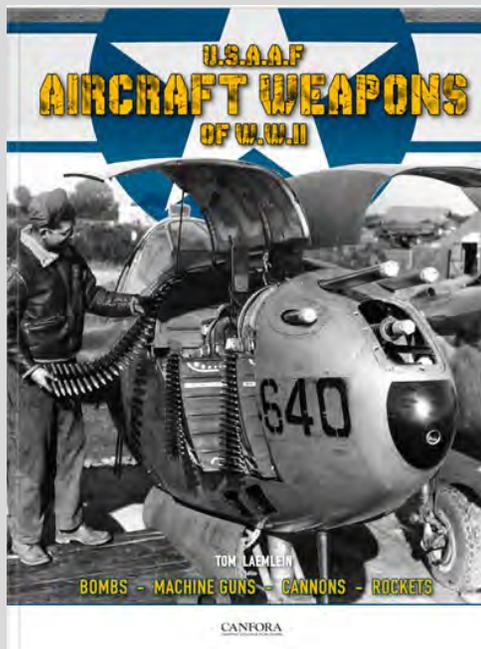
A Novel of MACVSOG in Vietnam. By Gene Pugh a Special Forces Recon Team Member.

[Get Your Copy From Amazon for \\$21.95.](#)

together as soul mates in a hope that one of them can save the other. Purvis like the others wondered why they were saved and the answer was there all the time.

- Paperback : 312 pages
- ISBN-10 : 1539108333
- ISBN-13 : 978-1539108337
- Dimensions : 6 x 0.71 x 9 inches

Gene is a member of our advisory board.



By Tom Laemlein

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Tom is a member of our advisory board.

Many of the photos and illustrations in this book, some of them in color, are strong enough to be displayed in full page format. The images deliver

## U.S.A.A.F. Aircraft Weapons of WWII

This book focuses on the war-winning weaponry of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. With 144 pages containing more than 250 photos it offers stunning visual details of the machine guns, cannons, bombs, and rockets carried into battle by USAAF bombers, fighters, and attack aircraft. Many of the photos and illustrations in this book, some of them in color, are strong enough to be displayed in full page format. The images deliver the gritty details of USAAF armaments' use down to their nuts and rivets, and the high-velocity rounds they fired. This is the first photo-history of its kind, with many of the photos never-before published.

Combat conditions dictated that many aircraft were adapted into roles for which they were not designed. As necessity is the mother of invention, aircraft were modified in both their roles and their armament. B-29s became ground attackers, A-20s became night fighters, and every wartime USAAF fighter was adapted to carry bombs.

the gritty details of USAAF armaments' use down to their nuts and rivets, and the high-velocity rounds they fired. This is a unique photo-study, with many of the photos never-before published.

## Museum Projects



### **MIA's - Missing in Action**

We have information on over 90,000 MIAs. This includes most all the World War II MIAs and some from World War I, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War.

With our strategic partners, the MIA Recovery Network, we want to tell the last chapter in the life of these Citizen Soldiers.

We would also like your help in telling the first chapters of the lives of those still Missing in Action. Do you have service photos of a family member that is or was MIA? News articles? Service related material?

Material on Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines MIAs:

<https://www.sonsoflibertymuseum.org/missing-in-action/>

Air Corps:

<https://www.armyaircorpsmuseum.org/missing-in-action/>



### **X-Files - Buried Unknowns**

There are many citizen soldiers whose body was recovered, but they are unidentified. There are thousands of these unknowns buried in American Battle Monument Cemeteries around the world. They are also known as X-Files.

Material on Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines X-Files can be found:

<https://www.sonsoflibertymuseum.org/buried-unknowns/>

<https://www.armyaircorpsmuseum.org/buried-unknowns/>

Get Donation Information: [Artifacts](#) [Monetary](#)



### **Awards, Rosters Unit Documents**

We need you ! A continued big thanks to our fantastic army of volunteers. We have much more so if you can type and have a couple hours each week we can use you !

Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force

We have received material on many units and are hoping to compile much more.

Unit Citations, Awards, Transfers, Rosters

Many groups received unit citations during their particular conflict. The paperwork, in triplicate, would include a roster of all assigned and attached personnel. We are seeking and requesting copies of those roster documents. Please search your papers, talk to your association and help us out with this information and get them to us pronto!



### **Attention Website Owners & Veteran Associations**

Many WWII veterans organizations have shut. Many these organizations had developed some type of website, some with enormous amounts of data and history. Sadly, many had/have not made provisions for their website to be continued and thus when the bill stops being paid, the website disappears and all the work and information is lost. We want to help and we need you to help us. If you know of a disbanding group, please have them get in contact with us; we would like to bring their website and information under our wing. If they want to continue to maintain it we can give them access to continue that as well. One of our top goals for this and every year is to preserve this history not lose it!

Not a WW2 unit? That's ok. We are also interested in your history and want to help preserve it. Korea, Vietnam and all other conflicts.

If your organization has physical materials such as uniforms, patches, photos and other memorabilia do you have plans for them when you cease operations? We would be honored to be the custodian of your group's history.

## **Contact**

Sons of Liberty Museum  
[www.SonsOfLibertyMuseum.org](http://www.SonsOfLibertyMuseum.org)  
[history@sonsoflibertymuseum.org](mailto:history@sonsoflibertymuseum.org)

Army Air Corps Library and Museum  
[www.ArmyAirCorpsMuseum.org](http://www.ArmyAirCorpsMuseum.org)  
[history@armyaircorpsmuseum.org](mailto:history@armyaircorpsmuseum.org)

Directors' Line: 214.957.1393

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