

would be short for while an attack would be delayed it was seldom permanently cancelled. For the enemy on the ground, like the Allied aircrews, a number was either "up or not up." Fate and circumstance play a strange role in life and an even stranger one in war.

In the Marauder formations that entered enemy territory, flak would now be encountered on most days with the enemy firing with increasing effectiveness through often 10/10 cloud cover. Gun laying radar was coming into increased use by the German anti-aircraft units and it was proving effective. The resultant damage to the Marauders placed a heavy burden on the ground crews who did most of their work outdoors with fingers usually numb from the cold. Notwithstanding, their dedication to "keep 'em flying" was enormous and "keep them flying" they did—often by working 24 hour days.

During February, the escorting fighters continued to make rendezvous with the Marauders in spite of the weather and this, plus the German emphasis on the attack of the heavies, resulted in all but two missions going unchallenged by German fighters. In only one of these two instances did the Luftwaffe actually fire on the 323rd Group. Further, on this one aerial attack, the Luftwaffe only made one pass with four FW-190s in the vicinity of St. Pol. No damage was done and the enemy aircraft high-tailed it with Spitfires in hot pursuit. Increasingly, the German fighter pilots seemed less inclined to press the attack. Later in the war the German aerial aggressiveness would return.

The February bombing attacks began on the 3rd with three NoBall targets as objectives. Four aircraft were damaged by flak but, with weather interceding on behalf of the Germans, no bombs were dropped.

On the 4th, the aircrews were briefed to attack the NoBalls at Linghem and Le Grismont but poor weather led to the missions being scrubbed before take-off. Late on the 5th this attack finally got off the ground but weather over the targets forced all three boxes to drop on the secondary target—a NoBall site at Dannes. The bombing results were fair to good but the cost was three aircraft with 19 aircrewmen lost, 30 other aircraft damaged and two returning aircrewman wounded.⁶ The Marauders going down had been flown by Capt. James N. Bryan, 1st Lt. Robert P. Mims⁷ and 1st Lt. Arthur J. Mandiberg. Some parachutes were seen.⁸

⁶Superficially wounded were Sgts John H. Niven and Louis Rosen.

⁷For an account of the shooting down of "Swamp Chicken" flown by Lt. Mims, see Roger A. Freeman, *op. cit.* pp. 85-87.

⁸MIA were Capt. James N. Bryan, 1st Lt. John K. Brush, 1st Lt. Salvatore E. Echo, S/Sgt William J. Hendrickson, S/Sgt John A. Holton, 1st Lt. William J. Hook, 1st Lt. Leon R. Jackson, 1st

The "Owens Crew" had just joined the 323rd Group. "I had flown two check out missions as Co-Pilot with this being our first full aircrew mission. The experience was unnerving. When the flak caught us, it was like all hell broke loose. Two aircraft in front of us were hit dead on and immediately fell out of formation. A direct hit blew the engine off one aircraft while a hit on the second caused the propeller to come off and fly through the formation. I was amazed at how quick this all happened."⁹

The "Chriesman Crew" was scheduled as a spare but at the last minute it was ordered to take-off and join up in a number seven position. "As it so happened, this was in Lt. Mandiberg's flight. When the flak came up, it was fierce. One shell made a direct hit on Mandiberg's right engine. Continuing to spin, the propeller came off and flew through the formation. Behind Mandiberg, we flew through a curtain of oil, nuts and bolts."¹⁰

Back over Earls Colne, Capt. Roscoe R. Haller found his aircraft so badly damaged that he headed his Marauder to Clacton-on-Sea and gave the order to his aircrew to bail out.¹¹ Capt. Haller, the last man to leave the aircraft, had his parachute open prematurely. Gathering it up in his arms, he went out and, once free of the aircraft, fed it into the slip stream and landed safely. Bud Hutton, Stars and Stripes Staff Writer, learned of Capt. Haller's escapade and wrote it up in the February 11, 1944 issue of that GI newspaper.

A MARAUDER BASE, Feb 10—When Capt. Roscoe Haller gathered a torn, unpacked parachute in his arms and jumped out of his flak-crippled B-26, Miss Chievious, he brought the curtain down on one of the most hilarious bail-out performances ever enacted over England.

Over the command radio, Col. Wilson R. Wood . . . told Haller to bail out the crew and either crash-land alone or bail out himself. Haller settled for the latter, and then things began to happen.

S/Sgt Bryce Ramey . . . discovered his chute harness was too loose, and 1st Lt. Francis

Lt. Arnold J. Mandiberg, 1st Lt. John R. Martin, Sgt Harry E. McLandish, T/Sgt William F. McLaren, 1st Lt. Robert P. Mims, S/Sgt Michael R. Miyo, Sgt Paul C. Pearce, 1st Lt. Winton A. Scott, S/Sgt Silvio J. Tulipane, S/Sgt William F. Vermillion, S/Sgt Robert C. White and Capt. Charles L. Whyte.

⁹Postwar comments of Charles R. Owens.

¹⁰Postwar comments of John W. Price.

¹¹Joining the Caterpillar Club were, in addition to Capt. Haller, S/Sgt Samuel B. Findley, Lt. George J. Freisner, T/Sgt Bryce Ramey, S/Sgt James M. Smith (injured) and Lt. Francis B. Wheat.



February 5, 1944. (Above) Death strikes a white tailed Marauder. (Below) The Marauder, minus an outboard wing section, screams to earth. According to notes, the Pilot was James N. Bryan. (J. Perlinski)



Wheat . . . tied Ramey's harness on with six feet of rope cut from the dinghy. [After landing] Ramey was chased around a field by a zealous knife-armed farmer who mistook him for a Nazi parachutist.

When S/Sgt Sam Findley . . . and S/Sgt Jimmy Smith . . . had gone out, Haller and Wheat took the ship to the coast and Wheat bailed out.

"I started to follow," Haller said, "but as I got up I accidentally pulled the ring on my chute and the wind rushing through the nose well spread the silk through the ship.

Gathering the silk in his arms and leaving the pilot chute sticking over his shoulder, Haller

jumped. The trailing edge of the chute caught on the bomb-bay door, ripping out the panel and leaving him with only half of the chute from 1,000 feet on down.

Except for a single sentence written by Roger Freeman in *B-26 Marauder at War*, no one took account of S/Sgt Michael J. Miyo's escape following the shoot down of "Swamp Chicken." In Marauder Man tradition, S/Sgt Miyo not only eluded the Germans but joined the Free French of the Interior (FFI) with the rank of Captain—uniquely thereby achieving the highest foreign grade of any person in the 323rd Group.

After I pulled the rip cord, there was a white flash in front of my eyes. Then I felt a jerk and fell through the branches of a tree before hitting the ground.

About an hour after I landed and while I was lying on the wet, snow-covered ground in a small woods, I heard German soldiers beating the bushes and hollering, "Hello, hello." Eventually, they came to within 15 yards of me but still didn't see me.

Hungry, wet and cold, on the second day of hiding I decided to come out of the woods and take my chances. Soon I saw this house standing by itself and elected to knock at the door. Fortunately, the residents, a Czechoslovakian farmer and his Polish wife, took me in and, for some two months thereafter, sheltered and fed me. At night, I was allowed to sleep in their barn but, in the daytime, I had to hide in the woods behind their house.

It was while hiding in these woods that I was approached by a Frenchman, subsequently known to me as Arthur, and sworn into the FFI. Arthur was later killed while fighting the Germans during their retreat around Epps, France.

By the time Arthur was killed, I had been relocated to a family in the coal mining town of Calonne-Riccourt; had met many of the FFI; and, along with several other shot down Americans, was working and moving about rather openly. Actually, Reginald Ferguson, a B-17 Gunner, and I attended Arthur's funeral. The Germans, by then, were more interested in withdrawing than finding shot down Americans.¹²

While a member of the FFI, "Captain" Miyo participated in ambushes of German forces, blowing up trucks and otherwise disrupting the German logistics and communications. Challenging the identity of one of the French agents sent to contact his FFI unit,

¹²Postwar comments of Michael R. Miyo.