

# Original Aircraft of the 449th Bomb Group

## 719th Squadron

**"PUDGY II"** Delivered to Bruning 9 Nov. '43, assigned to 719th Operations Staff and Squadron C. O. David Council. Demise: Crashed 8 Dec. '43 into a mountain in the Atlas Range of North West Africa during movement overseas. 14 KIA. Tail #01; serial #42-07747.

**Circumstances of Loss:** The Group began movement overseas on 16 November 1943. The individual airplanes of the air echelon headed for Italy by a route which took them to Florida, thence to Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Brazil. The Atlantic crossing was made between Brazil and Dakar, Africa. From Dakar the Group flew north to Morocco, thence east to Tunisia, and finally north across the Mediterranean Sea to southern Italy. In north Africa, they had to negotiate a flight through the Atlas Mountain Range. By the first week in December, the individual aircraft formed a long, unending chain stretching from Topeka to North Africa. Such a massive movement of men and equipment was certain to produce mishaps. Tragedy struck the Group for the first time on the 8th of December. Captain David Council, C. O. of the 719th Squadron, and twelve others died when ship #01 struck a mountain peak in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa.

**"STAR EYES"** Delivered to Bruning 28 Oct. '43, assigned to Meade's crew. Demise: After at least 70 missions, the ship was heavily damaged and salvaged for parts on 3/19/45. Tail #02; serial #41-29203.

**"LOS LOBOS"** Delivered to Bruning 25 Oct. '43, assigned to Polink's crew. Demise: Heavily damaged 10 Feb. '44 making a return landing with a load of fragmentation bombs. Several bombs broke loose on the landing. Ship salvaged for spare parts. No injuries. Tail #03;

serial #42-07761.

**"JUANITA"** Delivered to Bruning 28 Oct. '43, assigned to Woltkamp's crew. Demise: Downed 1/16/44 by fighters with Woltkamp's crew aboard. Tail #04; serial #42-52126.

**Circumstances of Loss:** On the morning of 10 Feb. 1944, twenty-three 449th B-24s attacked the German airdrome near Osoppo in northeastern Italy. Although there were "no attacks by enemy planes" and "no flak over the target area," ship #4 with Woltkamp's crew was "lost after the target." Reportedly, ship #4 "ditched in the Adriatic sea about 25 miles from Venice, Italy." It was subsequently learned that five of the crew members perished, and the remaining five became POWs.

**"SUNSHINE"** Delivered to Bruning 23 Oct. '43, assigned to Stephen's crew. Demise: Damaged 3/29/44 by flak over North Italy with Hemphill's crew aboard. Crew attempted to make it to Switzerland. Misidentified destination and landed at a German airfield at Venegono, Italy. Crew became POWs. Aircraft was subsequently used for propaganda purposes by the Luftwaffe. Tail #05; serial #42-52106.

**Circumstances of Loss:** On 29 March 1944, between 0740 and 0821 hours, thirty-eight 449th B-24s took off to make an attack on the marshalling yard at Bolzano, Italy. The last ship to take-off -- ship #5, Sunshine, with Hemphill's crew aboard -- was destined on this day to a fate which was unique among 449th aircraft. Thirty-six of the aircraft reached the target and dropped 87-1/2 tons of bombs on the target area. By 1530 hours, thirty-five of the 449th aircraft had returned to base. The missing aircraft was Sunshine. Its fate was a mystery to Group personnel. In the months to come, it would be learned that Sunshine, flying at the very rear of the 449th formation, was hit by flak over the target which knocked out two engines. Hemphill's crew knew they could not make it back to southern Italy. The safe haven of Switzerland, however, was less than 75 miles away. Therefore, rather than bail out, the pilots turned westward and began

trading distance for altitude in an attempt to make it to a Swiss airfield. A few minutes later, what was believed to be an airfield in Switzerland was located, and Hemphill brought Sunshine in for a safe landing. Ironically, it was not Switzerland. It was northern Italy. The entire crew was immediately taken prisoner, and turned over to the Germans. Sunshine, completely intact, was taken over by the Luftwaffe for propaganda purposes. Among 449th aircraft, it was a unique fate.

**"BETTY JEAN"** Delivered to Bruning 6 Nov. '43, assigned to Phillip's crew. Demise: Downed 1/19/44 by flak over Perugia, Italy, with Phillip's crew aboard. 6 POW, 4 Evaded. Tail #06; serial #41-28625.

**Circumstances of Loss:** The enemy reconnaissance base at Perugia, Italy, was the 449th target on 19 Jan. 1944. There were no attacks by enemy aircraft. However, the "heavy, moderate-to-intense, accurate flak" mortally damaged ship #6, Betty Jean. When last seen by other aircraft in the formation, ship #6 was "heading for the east coast and still going down -- number-3 feathered and number-4 on fire." Nine chutes were seen. It was subsequently learned that all ten members of Phillips' crew successfully bailed out. "Seven became POWs and three successfully evaded. Although Betty Jean was the Group's fifth loss on a combat mission, she may well have been the first Group aircraft actually brought down by enemy flak.

**"TWO TON TESSIE"** Delivered to Bruning 27 Oct. '43, assigned to Fergus crew. Demise: Downed 5/29/44 with Fergus's crew aboard. 10 POW. Tail #07, serial #42-52117.

**Circumstances of Loss:** Enroute, to Wiener-Neustadt on 29 May 1944, some 20 minutes before reaching the IP, the radio operator aboard ship #7 called in on the command frequency saying they were "having trouble with [the] turbos." The Group leader instructed ship #7 to jettison their bomb load. After dropping its bombs, ship #7 was able to maintain position in the formation. However, just as the Group was reaching the IP, ship #7 dropped out of the formation and turned back

alone. Ship #7 was apparently still under control when it turned back, and no chutes were seen. "This aircraft was not seen after that time" by any of the Group aircraft. It would later be learned that ship #7 fell victim to enemy fighters after the turn back. All ten members of Fergus' crew succeeded in bailing out safely and subsequently became POWs.

**"PAPER DOLL"** Delivered to Bruning 15 Oct. '43, assigned to Garrison's crew. Demise: Downed by fighters on 4/4/44 over Bucharest with Garrison's crew aboard. 7KIA, 3 POW. Tail #08; serial #42-07691.

**Circumstances of Loss:** "ATTACK BUCHAREST MARSH YARDS" read the operational order for 4 April 1944 which sent the 449th on its most famous, memorable, and costly mission. Twenty-eight ships of the 449th, unescorted and unaccompanied by other groups, attacked the marshalling yards. "Approximately 80 to 100 enemy aircraft attacked the formation" as the 449th departed the target. The ferocious air battle lasted for an hour and a half. Five minutes after bombs were away, ship #8 was observed to go down "in a controlled dive to 10,000 feet" with "the right wing badly shot up" then "caught fire, rolled on back and crashed."

**"GUARDIAN ANGEL"** Delivered to Bruning 15 Oct. '43, assigned to Woodle's crew. Demise: Downed 2/22/44 by flak and fighters over Regensburg, Germany, with Woodle's crew aboard. 11 POW. Tail #09; serial #42-07715.

**Circumstances of Loss:** On 22 February 1944, the 449th attacked the Obertraubling Aircraft Factory at Regensburg, Germany. They met stiff resistance in the form of both fighters and flak. The enemy fighters scored direct hits on ship #9. Guardian Angel was mortally damaged and forced to fall out of formation. It was last sighted settling into the cloud cover under heavy attack by the pursuing fighters.

**"MIGHTY MOUSE"** Delivered to Bruning 20 Oct. '43, assigned to Frone's crew. Demise: Ditched at sea 1/15/44 with Frone's crew aboard. 4 bailed out and became POW, 6 who remained with the ship were KIA. Tail #10;

serial #41-28594.

**Circumstances of Loss:** The 449th attacked the marshalling yard at Prato, Italy on 15 January 1944. The 449th formation departed Grottaglie, crossed southern Italy on an almost due east course to the Isle of Capri, there taking up a northwesterly course which roughly paralleled the Italian coastline. Shortly after passing the Isle of Elba, ship #10 suddenly lost power in two engines. Only two options were open -- either bail out or attempt a ditching at sea. Evidently crew members were given a choice. Four crew members successfully bailed out, and were subsequently picked up by rescue boats. The six who chose to remain with the ship died in the ditching.

**"BETTY ANN"**Delivered to Bruning 20 Oct. '43, assigned to Thieme's crew. Demise: One of the three 719th ships lost during the overseas movement in December 1943. Ship encountered severe icing conditions over west Africa. Crew was forced to bail out on 15 Dec. '43. Thirteen bailed out successfully, 1 KIA when chute failed to open. Tail #11; serial #41-292175.

**Circumstances of Loss:** The Group began movement overseas on 16 November 1943. The individual airplanes of the air echelon headed for Italy by a route which took them to Florida, thence to Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Brazil. The Atlantic crossing was made between Brazil and Dakar, Africa. From Dakar the Group flew north to Morocco, thence east to Tunisia, and finally north across the Mediterranean Sea to southern Italy. In north Africa, they had to negotiate a flight through the Atlas Mountain Range. By the first week in December, the individual aircraft formed a long, unending chain stretching from Topeka to North Africa. Such a massive movement of men and equipment was certain to produce mishaps. Near Meknes, North Africa, ship #11 encountered severe icing conditions forcing the crew to bail out. All bailed out successfully except Captain Hiero Hays whose parachute failed to open.

**"HASSAN THE ASSASSIN"**Delivered to Bruning 6 Nov. '43, assigned to Zimmerman's

crew. Enroute overseas in December 1943, the ship was damaged landing in Puerto Rico necessitating that the ship be grounded for extensive repairs. The crew proceeded to Italy by "hitch-hiking" on various transports en route with space available. Final Demise: Ship repaired and transferred to 459th Bomb Group, where it was renamed "TAMERLANE II". Crashed 3/17/44 in Austria. Tail #12; serial #41-29237.

**"DIXIE BELL"** Delivered to Bruning 1 Nov. '43, assigned to Grimmer's crew. Demise: Downed 4/4/44 over Bucharest with Kendall's crew aboard. 2KIA, 8 POW. Tail #13; serial #41-29193.

**Circumstances of Loss:** "ATTACK BUCHAREST MARSH YARDS" read the operational order for 4 April 1944 which sent the 449th on its most famous, memorable, and costly mission. Twenty-eight ships of the 449th, unescorted and unaccompanied by other groups, attacked the marshalling yards. "Approximately 80 to 100 enemy aircraft attacked the formation" as the 449th departed the target. The ferocious air battle lasted for an hour and a half. Shortly after the target, ship #13 was observed to fall out of formation with the number-3 engine on fire. Nine chutes were seen.

**"LONESOME"** Delivered to Bruning 19 Oct. '43, assigned to Geisel's crew. Demise: Transferred to 15th Air Force Depot after 41 missions. Subsequently reassigned to another Bomb Group. Post-war salvage, 8/16/45. One of the few original Bruning ships to survive the war. Tail #14; serial #42-07732.

**"PATCHES"** or **"LIL LASSIE"** Delivered to Bruning 9 Nov. '43, assigned to Gentry's crew. This ship was intended to be named "Lil Lassie" when time permitted after arrival in Italy. However, after a few missions, it was seen to have been patched (aluminum squares rivetted over flak and bullet holes) so many times by contrasting colored metal that it was given the name "Patches". Demise: Transferred to 15th AF Depot. Subsequently reassigned to another Bomb Group. Salvaged after crashlanding 7 Aug. '44. Tail #15; serial

#42-52155.

**"MAUI MAID"**Delivered to Bruning 10 Nov. '43. With Group C. O. Col. Darr Alkire as lead pilot, this ship led the overseas flight from Bruning, Nebraska to Morrison AAF, Florida, and from there overseas by the southern route in December 1943. Col. Alkire's crew was made up of the Group HQs staff, operations, and support personnel. Alkire and crew landed at Grottaglie, Italy, as the first 449th bomber on the field. This ship flew a few missions with other crews. Demise: Ground accident, ran into an embankment. No injuries. Ship salvaged for spare parts. Tail #16; serial #41-28623.

---

[Home](#) | [Contact](#) | [Glossary of Terms](#) | [Report an Error](#) | [Mobile Site](#)

A *DC* Site

© 2013 Devin Cress and