

In The Soup at 14,000 & No Radios!

Ken Ferland here. I was a member of the Templeton crew. We were a later replacement crew and flew 9 missions. We were assigned to the 732nd sqd.

We were on the mission that was supposed to form over France at 14,000 feet. We arrived at our assigned area and we were still in the soup at 14,000 ft, so we climbed and broke out at 20,000. In the meantime our nav-aids and radio went out and we became lost. We were flying in a circle and calling maydays when off in the distance we spotted 3 fighters heading towards us. Thank God they were 3 of our P-47s. They brought us over to a group of B-17s. needless to say, the gunners on those 17s were a little leery of us at first, but there was also another B-24 that had joined this group. We thought we would drop our bombs with the 17s, then follow them back to their base. We dropped our bombs with them and they started a let down thru the soup. **They, of course knew where they were heading and we lost them** in the thick clouds. We climbed back up to 20,000 and kept flying in a circle and the co-pilot calling maydays. We didn't know if we were over water or near mountains and the thought of having to jump wasn't very appealing.

The best part of my story is the fact that an English lass came on the air in answer to our maydays!!! She made us fly a triangle, then gave us a heading for England. We let down over the channel and a couple of spits came up and checked us out before they gave us a heading back to old buck. We landed and found out that the mission had been re-called. We had taken plane numbers off some of the 17s and the 24. The Group verified the fact that we had dropped our bombs with the 17s, so we received credit for the mission and so did the 453rd.

Our crew came back on the USS Hermitage. I'll never forget the train ride around London on VE day, when we were on our way to the ship, and seeing all the happy English people. After reporting back to Ft. Dix AB a group of us gunners transferred to mats and flew on C-47s as crew members known as loadmasters.

Thanks for letting me write about this experience.

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