I don't know if he didn't see us. I can't figure out how he could miss. But if he did see us, I don't know why he didn't come back and try to shoot us or pick us up. However, he just flew off and didn't

When we were going straight down on a bomb run, I could see the shells bursting directly in front of us and knew that we were going to hit. The first burst hit our number four engine. That's the

KU-88. It was just skimming the water and flying a little to one side of us, it went by so close that we could see the expression on the pilot's face. We tried to make ourselves as small as possible but

exactly what to look for and we started to signal the plane.

We were completely out of sight of the mainland but we could see an island about fifteen miles away. Our paddling served only as a means to keep us warm, so we took off our scarves and tried to

about twenty minutes we didn't get any answer. We never did see either of those two fellas again. We knew there was nothing more that we could do to help them so we set about trying to save

however, nothing we could say or do would stop him. He took off all his heavy equipment, everything but his light uniform, took two life preservers and threw them over. The fellow he was going after

and stopped to rest on a box that was floating there in the water. He called to us to come after him. We were paddling all the time but making no headway at all. We called to him and told him to

However, we knew that no one stood a chance in the water that day. And we knew that no one had a good feel of practice and really knew how to shoot.

The plane that my radio operator was on was hit by an enemy fighter, then lost control and went down into the water. We never saw either of those two fellas again.

We were doing ninety miles an hour when we hit the water and we stopped instantly. We went from ninety miles an hour to zero in nothing flat. That shook us up quite a bit. The bulkhead came

to pieces and the fuel and the parts were flying around inside the ball. However, the operator did not get a scratch. That's rather a good thing also, because he too was flying his fifth mission.

A piece of that shell burst right through his left foot, taking three toes with it, so he found out what combat was like in a hurry.

The below speech from J. Marvin Turner explains his experience working with the B-17 bombers that were commonplace by the U.S. military in World War II.

I ask you to imagine that you are out on the deck of a ship sailing in calm seas on a peaceful day. You are standing with your fists clenched, your eyes focused on the horizon, ready to face whatever
come our way. What is in the distance is a sight you have never seen before - a B-17 bomber in flight. You see its sleek white fuselage gliding across the sky, its engines轰轰隆隆 as it passes by.

Another burst hit the number three engine. As the air was sucked out of the ball turret, the entire structure of the aircraft began to shake. The noise was deafening, and the vibrations were intense.

Another burst hit the number two engine. The pilot struggled to maintain control, but the plane was now out of his control. He called to us to come after him, but we were unable to do so.

None of us had ever seen a British air, uh, rescue plane before, so we didn't know

I was the first one that got up, got to the raft on the left-hand side of the plane. I was supposed to cut the cord holding the raft to the ship. But the shock of landing had knocked the knife from my

The radio operator did not get a scratch. That's rather a good thing also, because he too was flying his fiftieth mission. Another burst hit the number four engine. The aircraft was now out of control.

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come back. That gave us kind of a scare so that we were leery about trying to signal any more planes.

However, in a little while, we did see some planes that we knew were definitely British and that were looking for us. We also saw a rescue launch. They were all looking in the spot where our plane had gone down, while the wind had blown us about three miles away. They couldn't see us — we were just another speck on the ocean for them and we couldn't find our flares so that we could signal them. So we just had to sit there and watch them look for us, without being able to do anything. It was just like a game of hide and seek.

After four hours of floating around that one, of the fellows was pushing around in the bottom of the raft and found a flare kit. At about the same time, one of the rescue planes flew fairly close overhead, so we fired three flares. We thought he didn't see us because he turned and went away while we were beginning to feel pretty low. We didn't know when another plane would be around.

However when he got down to the place where the launch was, he turned and started back in our direction. We knew then that he had seen us and had just gone down there to signal the launch, so we started to feel pretty good. He came back and continued to circle us and dropped smoke bombs on the water to indicate our position to the rescue launch. In a few minutes the launch came alongside and took us on board. That was only a little forty-five or forty foot boat. But it couldn't have looked better if it'd been the Queen Mary itself.

They took us below deck, took off our wet clothing, rubbed us down good, and put warm, dry clothes on us. We just sat there on the table and they did everything for us just like we were babies. Sure made us feel pretty good.

The colonel was flat lying on the floor, bringing his lip, and not saying anything. It had been about five hours since he lost his toes and we hadn't been able to give him any first aid, so he was in considerable pain. The launch had no facilities for treating him so they radioed a British destroyer that was in the area, that had a doctor on board, so they [bailed] up alongside and took the colonel off. I heard since that he got all right and went back to his outfit and flew combat again. He certainly was a swell egg.

The launch took us out into the island we had seen and we stayed in the British officers' quarters for the next two days. The reason for this delay was because a very bad storm came up right after we got on the island and the water was so rough that the launch couldn't take us back to the mainland. It was a good thing they picked us up when they did or I am sure we would never have lasted the night out in that raft.

We finally got back to the mainland and our base and then they gave us some time off to rest up. I took a three-day pass and went down to [?] for my rest. I came back to the squadron on Friday night, March the 10th. I looked on the bulletin board and saw that my crew, the one I had been Overseas with, was scheduled to fly the next day, as a complete crew for the first time. That is, everybody was going to fly their own position. Except the bombardier who was flying on the lead ship and another fellow who was taking my place.

I went into operations, asked if I couldn't fly. Said that I was well rested, ready to start again and also since this was my crew's first time I wanted to be with them. Ed Morrow, the fellow in charge of making up the roster said, "Aw, don't be eager. Take another day off. I'll do you good. And besides, you'll have plenty more chances to fly with your crew." I argued with him for a while longer but nothing I could say would make him change the roster, so I went back to my tent and went to bed.

The next morning, my crew got up, my best buddy, a fellow that I'd been with for about a year and a half and had luckily been put on the same crew with me, came over and woke me up and said, "In case anything happens today and I don't come back, you know where all my things are and what to do with them." Of course we had all made arrangements like this with one another in case some of us didn't come back, that those that were left would take care of a few of our personal articles as soon as they got home all right. However, we didn't talk much about that. So I said, "Aw go on, get outa here. I'll see ya this afternoon."

So he and the rest of the crew went out and flew on the mission. Went up to a target in northern Italy. Just a few B-17s without fighter escorts. There were no fighters to send with them. They went over the target and all but the lead plane dropped the bombs. They met no flak or fighters so they decided to make a big circle and go over the target a second time and let the lead plane dump its load.

While they were doing this, the Jerries had enough time to fit up a number of fighter planes. My crew was flying the last ship in the formation, a position known as Tail-end Charlie and always the first one to be attacked by fighters. The Jerries didn't waste any time this time and hit the boys' ship with two rockets. It didn't go down right away. In fact, they even managed to stay in formation until they were ten or fifteen miles out over the Adriatic Sea, when their engines caught on fire. When that happens, you don't ask any questions, you just bail out in a hurry.

A few of the boys got out and then the plane blew up, completely disintegrated. And there was nothing left but a big puff of black smoke. When that happened, what happened to the rest of the boys, we don't know since we have never heard another word since that day. They were probably drowned or died of exposure in the water but there is a slight possibility that they might have been picked up by Italian fishing boats that might have been in the area. That's only a slim hope but we are holding on to. Untill the area is cleared and the underground is opened and all the boys are returned.

That left just two of us on the original crew still flying, the bombardier and myself. The bombardier got up to his twenty-fourth mission but on May 10th he was flying over a target in Austria. He stopped a good-sized piece of flak with his left arm and side. When I heard from him in October, he was still in the hospital over there and in such bad shape that he couldn't even be flown back to the States. He'd had thirteen operations and twenty-three blood transfusions. He really got banged up.

That left me all by myself. I did a lot of thinking. When you've lost all nine of your buddies you can't help but wonder sometimes what's going to happen next. I was put in a tent with five other fellows who had lost all their crew but themselves. So the six of us were the remains of six crews. We kept each other pretty good company.

I had pretty good luck from there on. And on July fourteenth, I flew my fiftieth and last mission over Budapest. When I came back, I got out and kissed the ground. I was pretty happy. I also said a good-long prayer of thanks because you can't get through those things on just luck. It takes a lot more than that.

Well, that's the story of one crew. It's not an unusual or outstanding story. The same thing has happened to a good many crews before and will happen to a good many crews before this thing is over. It's not a pleasant thought but it's something that we all have to face. The only thing we can do back here to bring them back quickly and all in one piece is work like the dickens to support these War Bonds Drives a hundred percent. I know that's what you want and I'm also sure that you won't let us down.

Thank you.

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The Adriatic Sea is the body of water between Italy and what was then Yugoslavia.

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3 January 2018