

## **THAT B-17 NAMED "TIME'S-A-WASTIN'"**

**Written by Paul Chryst (401<sup>st</sup> Squadron)**

Time's-A-Wastin' was a B-17G. It was delivered to RAF Burtonwood, England to be modified for combat with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Forces and delivered to the 91<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) stationed at Bassingbourn, 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Wing of the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division, (Strategic).

Assigned to the 322<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Squadron on 11 May 1944; then transferred to the 401<sup>st</sup> BS as a replacement aircraft. Capt. Sam Newton, Pilot and Lt. Bert Stiles completed their Tour of 30 missions in #504. She was named by the Line Crew Chief, Roy Fratz who now lives in Florida. Newton lives in Colorado but Stiles was KIA flying P-51s on a 2<sup>nd</sup> tour.

#504 flew this crew's last mission on June 8, 1944; just two days after the Invasion of Normandy. Her call letters were LL-D, with the radio code for the 401<sup>st</sup> BS as "LL" (or "Mutter" - D-Dog) and the Triangle "A" on the rudder denoted the 91<sup>st</sup> BG with the triangle as the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Division. This identification was very important for assembly into the formation of 36 to 48 a/c and the "max effort" missions (somedays) totaled more than 2,000 a/c.

During the period of August through December 1944, the 10 man crew of Lt. Ed Garner, Co-pilot Kermit Burman, Navigator John Allen, etc. - Lt. Paul Chryst flew as the Bombardier and Nose Gunner in #504. Record photos show TAW with more than 65 black 'bombs' painted above her nose art (indicating a bomb for each mission flown) by November of '44. Chryst flew his 35<sup>th</sup> Mission in #504 on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> and the Battle of the Bulge began the next morning (16<sup>th</sup>).

TAW flew again on December 24<sup>th</sup> through a severe ice storm and finally made a shaky landing at another Base nearby; due to rime iced runways at Bassingbourn. Chryst left England on Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> and as the other members of the crew completed their 35 sorties; they all returned to the USA.

But; #504 continued to fly each time the 91<sup>st</sup> BG was called on to finish the air battle over Europe. Other replacement crews became attached to "her dependability" and the 401<sup>st</sup> Squadron became the "lucky one again." S/Sgt. Roy Fratz was a wonderful Crew Chief and changing engines got easier and easier. Luckily, her battle damage was minor most of the time, and ole TAW survived into the winter of 1944-45.

The terrible winter months of January through March of 1945 made flying, maintenance, and aircrew safety more and more difficult. German fighter attacks may have been less frequent, but the flak (anti-aircraft fire) was more intense and accurate using improved ground radar sighting.

On the fateful morning of April 8<sup>th</sup>, Lt. Peter Pastras, Pilot and Lt. Bob Morris as Co-pilot with crew were assigned to fly #504; off the left wing of the Lead ship of the 401<sup>st</sup> BS. The primary target was the marshalling yards (railroad freight) of the City of Stendal. Bombing accuracy was critical; because a hospital was located very close by the tracks. No flak was expected; as the formation opened its bomb-bay doors at 20,000 ft. on the 'bomb run' to the target.

Lt. Mike Fodroci, Navigator, flying in the right wing position off the Lead; could easily watch the four gun flak batteries begin to "track" bursts through the Leading formation. He sat there in horror, as each of these shells began to burst closer and closer to TAW (the left wing position). The fourth set of flak

burst directly into the open bomb-bay of TAW. Fodroci reports that "the Pilot must have been killed instantly; for the ship pulled up and veered to the right climbing directly over our ship. Capt. Shelby put our ship into a dive so steep that I was thrown up against the astro hatch of the ceiling in the nose - seems I hung there for a brief second or two!"

"I also observed that a bad fire was burning on TAW forward bomb-bay area and the Co-pilot (Lt. Bob Morris) was trying to climb out of the small window with his back pack on. Somehow, we saw (3) chutes emerge from #504 as she spun toward the earth and "her final end." No one knows the fate of those (9) airmen. You can be sure that 'Time's-A-Wastin' was gone forever." Tines A-Wastin' completed 96 missions.

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