

SHOT DOWN ON NEW YEARS EVE 1943

Written by Verne Woods

We arrived at the 91st BG in Bassingbourn in September 1943 and on our 13th mission six of us were shot down on New Years Eve, December 31, 1943. Our B-17 was alone, a straggling home on two engines, when we were attacked and shot down by two FW-190's. Two of us were killed, Mendelson and Hensley. Quinn escaped back to England. Lieberman, Hull, and Woods were captured and finished the war in POW camps. Four of the original crew members -- Borellis, Fox, Frans and Sadlo -- didn't fly on the fateful Dec. 31, 1943, mission. Borellis had been removed from the crew two weeks earlier and named 91st Bomb Group navigator, a position he held until the end of the war, completing 36 missions. Fox in March, 1944, was killed when his plane went down on his 25th mission. Sadlo was later shot down in January and became a POW and Frans completed 25 missions.

Oh, yes, I should make note of our 11th crew member, a female. Her name was "Eager Beaver" and we acquired her as a mongrel puppy in Dyersburg. In the photo she is being held by Borellis. She flew with us on innumerable practice missions before we arrived in England. There, whenever the flight didn't exceed 12,000 feet thus obviating the need for oxygen, she would go with us on practice missions. One such low altitude combat mission was flown, our November, 1943, mission to Norway. We took Eager Beaver along. So she had one combat mission, not enough for an air medal, however.

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