A POW'S MEMORY OF SURVIVAL

Herman J White was 18 years old when he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in July of 1944. He was a tail gunner assigned to the 484th Bomb Group. He participated in bombing missions over southern Germany, Austria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia.

As a Tech/Sgt White had flown nearly 25 missions before he and his crew lifted off the airfield in southern Italy on November 16, 1944, to bomb Munich, Germany. Ground anti-aircraft fire disabled number two engine and torched a fire in number three.

With two engines feathered, the ship began to drop over 300 feet per minute as the cylinder head temperatures on the two remaining engines began to climb. One engine was restarted in an effort to fly over the Swiss Alps, but the ship continued to drop, and the effort to climb was abandoned.

The crew began throwing everything out that could be pulled loose to lighten the ship when the order to bail out came.

"When I opened the hatch to make my escape the other crew members just stared ahead. They weren't sure what to do, so I said 'follow me' and out I went", White declared.

As he came down, the plane appeared over his left shoulder to disappear into a mountain. "I thought we were over the Adriatic at 8000 ft, but we were at 3000 ft, 500 miles behind enemy lines. Each of us was scared and bewildered. There were 30 Germans with dogs waiting for us as we hit the ground," White said.

"The Germans began to fire at us but we were not armed. There was little to do but surrender," White said. "I was scared not knowing what would happen next. I knew the Germans were mad about the saturation bombing the Allies were doing."

The Germans took him into northern Italy through the Brenner Pass to Munich and placed White in solitary confinement. "I was in a narrow cell for four days and nights," White said. "It was dark, had a narrow window and I slept on the floor."

Carrigan's bomb group (454th) and mine (484th) were a few miles west of Cernignola, Italy, but our groups belonged to different bomb wings. He never does say quite that he enjoyed his hours at the yoke of a B-24, but one gets the feeling of immense pride and thoroughness. I desperately tried to transfer into P-38s and did everything that a 19 year old can think of to shake B-24s dust off my feet. Tolerantly the 15th Air Force said fine, just finish your bomber tour first. The B-24, and my escapist attitude toward it, ruined my "feel" so that it took 10 hours of dual to check me out in an AT-6 in July 1945. I am grudgingly grateful to the B-24 for bringing me home over those 11 months in combat, still I never got to live my dream of rat racing an ME 109 into the ground.

Anyone who was there or who wished he were would enjoy this step-by-step description of every aspect of the B-24, interspersed with chilling, hopelessly-funny combat anecdotes as acid as cor- dite. At the end, I found myself humming our squadron drinking song (tune of "Strawberry Roan")...

Oh, that B dash two four; Oh, that four-engine who
The boys who fly in them, are sure bound to lose.
At 55 inches she won't even cruise,
Oh, that B dash two four....