

9/29/93

MR THOMAS WINEY

DEAR SIR:

RE: RICHARD D WILEY SERIAL # 0708600
NAVIGATOR ASSIGNED TO CREW 83-M
FOR COMBAT TRAINING AT MAROH FIELD CALIF.

I WENT THROUGH PILOT TRAINING WITH GAYLE W. KIZER AT TARRENT FIELD, FORT WORTH WHERE WE LEARNED TO FLY THE B-24. FROM THERE WE WERE SENT TO HAMMER FIELD, FRESNO CALIF. TO ASSEMBLE A CREW. IT WAS HERE THAT RICHARD WILEY SIGNED ON WITH KIZER AS NAVIGATOR - KIZER AND I WERE GOOD FRIENDS SO I KNEW THE MEMBERS OF HIS CREW AS HE KNEW MY PEOPLE. SO I TOO KNEW RICHARD. WHO WAS KNOWN AS "WINEY".

I HAD MY FIRST COMBAT EXPERIENCE ON THAT EVENTFUL MISSION TO YAP ON JULY 15, 1944. WE HAD TWO ENGINES SHOT OUT BUT MANAGED TO MAKE IT TO WADKE. WE LANDED ON A STRIP THAT WAS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION. THE AIRPLANE # 548 WAS BULLDOZED OFF INTO THE WEEDS SO CONSTRUCTION COULD CONTINUE. THAT HOWEVER IS ANOTHER STORY.

KIZER DITCHED AS WILLIAM BLAIR HAS TOLD YOU MOST OF THE CREW WAS FOUND AND PICKED UP AND THEY RETURNED TO COMBAT DUTY AS THEY BECAME PHYSICALLY ABLE.

ON OCT. 23, 1944 GAYLE KIZER'S CREW AND MINE WERE SELECTED FOR A SPECIAL SHIPPING SEARCH AND DESTROY MISSION. WE TOOK OFF TOGETHER AT 11:00 AM 10/23/44 ARRIVING AT OUR SEARCH AREAS AT DAY BREAK. OUR MISSION WAS TO SEARCH THE COASTAL AREAS OF THE CELEBES - KIZER WAS TO SEARCH THE NORTHERN COAST AND WE THE SOUTHERN COAST LINE. WE WERE LOOKING FOR SMALL COASTAL STEAMERS. EACH HOUR AFTER WE STARTED OUR SEARCH WE WERE TO REPORT OUR POSITION AND THE WEATHER WE WERE ENCOUNTERING. KIZER REPORTED IN FOR SIX HOURS - THEN NO MORE.

I RECALL THE BRIEFING OF THE MISSION BUT WOULD NOT SWEAR AFTER 49 YEARS THAT RICHARD WILEY WAS NAVIGATING FOR KIZER THAT DAY BUT I THINK HE MAY HAVE BEEN.

THE FOLLOWING IS JUST AN ASIDE NOTE:

KENDALL, KINZLE, KIZER, KLEIST + BLAIR CAME INTO THE 307th IN EARLY JULY
 KENDALL 370 SQD WAS SHOT DOWN OVER BALIKPAPAN 10/3/44
 KINZLE 424 SQD. WAS INVOLVED IN A MID AIR COLLISION 7/25/44
 KIZER 372 SQD. AS TOLD ABOVE LOST ON 10/24/44
 BLAIR 371 SQD. BROUGHT ALL 10 MEN HOME
 KLEIST 370 SQD. BROUGHT 9 MEN HOME - OUR NAVIGATOR CHARLES HARDER WAS KILLED 7/15/44

AS I REMEMBER THERE WAS A TOTAL OF 23 MEN THAT LIVED THROUGH THE TOUR OF DUTY.

VERY TRULY YOURS

Charles A Kleist

CHARLES A KLEIST

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P.S. THE ABOVE IS TAKEN FROM MY LOG BOOK

AND COPIES OF DOCUMENTS I HAVE RETAINED OVER THE YEARS.