

The following was taken from "The Long Rangers" by Sam Britt
Pages 248-250

The 372nd and 424th, were sent to Makassar Town on August 1st. The target was the barracks area. In addition to the twelve crews assigned to the main target, two crews, one from each squadron were assigned to the antiaircraft gun positions. My crew and I were the 372nd crew. We carried a load of thirty 100lb. phosphorous bombs. Intelligence was not sure just where the gun positions were located so Gail Wilson, the bombardier, was supposed to aim on the flash coming from the gun barrel. We were over the target for more than five minutes. The 424th crew did not make it over the target due to a malfunction in the bomb release mechanism. The other planes carried 260lb. fragmentation bombs. One report stated that forty-five percent of the bombs landed on the gun positions and another report stated that the bombing of the antiaircraft positions was excellent with fifty percent of the bombs falling in the target area blanketing the guns and according to one observer, effectively muzzling their fire. One phosphorous pattern covered the three gun A/A position with four single bursts being visible southwest of the target. The 372nd report stated that the bombing of the antiaircraft positions was excellent with an estimated ninety percent of the bombs falling within the assigned target. The A/A fire was rated as slight, heavy and inaccurate. The bombing of the main target resulted in fifty percent hitting within one thousand feet of the eastern target area and fifty percent within the western target area, starting three to five fires. After the bombing the crews were to go down and strafe shipping. Three planes were heavily damaged in strafing a two-masted schooner which probably sank.

Shortly after take off I noticed an oil leak in #3 engine with oil being very visible on the hub of the propeller. The copilot, Allen Gardner, and I watched it and the oil pressure gauge very closely because it was obvious that we were going to lose the engine. Because of this I dismissed the strafing part of the mission and took the shortest route to Morotai after completion of the

bombing run. The engine functioned until shortly after leaving the target. The oil pressure began to drop rather rapidly, so the engine was cut off and the prop feathered. We learned later that the leak was from a break in the feathering line, and that we were lucky to be able to feather it. We did not have to throw anything out and were able to maintain altitude with three engines. One crew lost an engine on the return to Morotai and threw out everything they could including the throat microphones which weighed but a few ounces.

The plane being piloted by Lt. Gene Traendly had used an unusual amount of fuel. The plane had a history of high fuel consumption. The carburetors had been changed a number of times in an attempt to correct this but had not helped. I had flown the same plane on a previous mission and lost three engines in the traffic pattern from lack of fuel, landing with one engine working.

Upon leaving the target, I called the leader, Capt. Donald A. McDonald(372nd) and informed him that I was heading for home. Gene Traendly called him shortly after that and informed him that he was following me. As Gene crossed the equator at the Celebes, he called Morotai to tell them his position and that the crew was bailing out. For some reason he could not raise Morotai, but I could, so I relayed his messages. At 1600 hours, Lt. Traendly's plane lost three engines. He informed me that they were bailing out. The entire crew got out of the plane safely. Just before leaving the plane, the copilot put the IFF on emergency position, and Gene set the auto pilot. Although the crew had just six minutes to prepare for the bail out, they left the plane well equipped.

Three panels ripped out of Gene's parachute and on his descent he spun like a top causing him to descend much too fast. Fortunately he was not injured. He stated that if he had not been a good swimmer, he would have drowned because of the speed with which he descended and the depth to which he went. His life raft was lost because of the parachute malfunction. The eight men that were rescued hit the water within four hundred yards of each other. Daly, Bankus and Eckstein got together in about fifteen minutes and Zimmerman reached them fifteen minutes later. They sighted Traendly and Stanhope two hundred yards or so away and started toward them. It was almost dark when they got to them. At this juncture a cry for help was heard off to one side and Daly left the group and guided by the shouting located Dugan who had lost his raft and had only his Mae West to support him. He was exhausted and probably owes his life to S/Sgt. Daly. It was completely dark when they rejoined the others. During the night they spent a good deal of time in the water as the raft could not hold all of them. They had food and water but sensibly refrained from consuming it. Meanwhile, Lt. Fred Taucher, the bombardier, had been having quite an experience of his own. At no time did he see any of the others after landing in the water. He prepared to make himself as comfortable as possible. After dark he dozed off and about midnight something clawed against his raft and overturned it. Fred immedi-

ately thought of sharks and got out a knife in case of another attack. His supposition was later proved correct, as teeth marks were visible in the rubber raft where a hole twelve inches in diameter had been bitten out. He spent the remainder of the night and most of the next day trying to repair his raft. When the Catalina crew picked him up at about 1600 hours on August 2nd, he was completely exhausted. His raft had sunk a few minutes before and only one-half of his Mae West would hold air. The PBY crew picked up the other seven men next and returned them to Morotai. Three members of the crew were not found.⁷⁰⁴

The mission was not a good one from a mechanical point of view. Of the six planes from the 372nd that went on the mission, four returned with one engine out and one plane did not return. Before reaching the target, Lt. Ansley(424th) had to cut #2 engine and feather the prop due to loss of oil pressure. He continued with the formation and bombed the primary target. Lt. Weisleder(424th) salvaged his bomb load over the Gulf of Bone because his bomb bay doors jammed.⁷⁰⁵

Returning from a mission to Amoenang, Celebes, on the next day, Lt. Scaglione(370th) spotted six or seven men in rafts. Five rafts were clustered together and the sixth one was some distance away. He radioed the position to the rescue Catalina. This could have been Lt. Traendly and crew.⁷⁰⁶