

Albin Joseph Hilde, Jr.

Memory of WWII by Elmer M. Brockmeier

Will explain why at the last of the memory. Hilde claimed after the war that he was the longest in grade 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. As he was a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. in the artillery outfit in South Dakota when war was declared. His outfit was called to duty. As things progressed his outfit, which was a horse outfit, didn't fit modern warfare so they decided to abandon them. As time went by people kept getting transferred out until Hilde and his 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. were all that were left. They then sent an auditor to close the outfit. The auditor checked the outfit's records and said they were short several sets of harnesses and many other items they no longer had but were still on the outfit's records. Many of these things were probably lost in WWI but never taken off the records. So Hilde said what do we do. The auditor said there is only 2 things...you are now commander so either produce the items or pay for the stuff. This of course amounted to thousands of dollars. The auditor left. Hilde was very depressed and discussed with his only GI. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Said all I know is to file for lost material which will probably not be approved but we will be assigned to a new outfit and they probably can't locate you. So this is what he did and never heard more of it.

Since all this happened he got a transfer to the Army Air Corps. He did this because he had been a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. so long and the Army Air Corps gave faster promotions, especially flying personnel. He got his wings and asked for the promotion. He was told he would have to be on a crew. He was sent to Salt Lake City, Utah for crew assignment. He was assigned to our crew but as a co-pilot. He couldn't outrank the 1<sup>st</sup> pilot so he remained a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. but was told he probably would get his own crew soon. We went through training at Tucson Air Base but he didn't get his crew. We went overseas but he was told in a short time he would probably get a crew soon. We were shot down on a mission to Budapest (our second) and any promotions were frozen for POWs. After we got home he transferred to a reserve outfit and got his promotion to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. As he had been in grade for a while in the artillery outfit and a while in the Army Air Corps he claimed he had the grade longer than anybody. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts. Normally only had the grade for a much shorter period of time.

For going overseas they didn't have enough planes for all the crews going so the pilots cut cards to see who flew and who went by boat. Our pilot lost on the cut so we went by boat. We were originally supposed to go to a base in North Africa. The boat docked but they said that since much progress had been made in Italy we would go there. We landed at Naples, Italy. The harbor had been bombed and the docks were unusable so we walked off our ship onto a sunken ship. We were sent to our outfit in Italy. On our third day there we were sent on our 1<sup>st</sup> mission to bomb an oil refinery in Afghanistan. We hardly made it back. We were given an old B24 that was really worn out. This usually happened to replacement crews as the better ones were used by older personnel. On the 4<sup>th</sup> day we were assigned to a mission in Budapest, Hungary. As we still had the old, worn out airplane it finally couldn't keep up with the group as the plane just didn't have enough power. We were finally falling out of the last group and losing altitude. The pilot decided to abort and had all ammo and guns thrown overboard thinking losing weight might help. Soon after we were attacked by a German fighter plane and shot us down. When Hilde bailed out he hit part of the tail and got injured. When he lit on the ground a Hungarian farmer attacked him and kicked him. He wound up with broken ribs and some lost teeth. Didn't know if the hitting the tail was some or all of the damage. We were sent to Gestapo Headquarters for interrogation but didn't see Hilde until much later as he was put in a German hospital for his injuries. Pilot and I were put in a POW camp at Sagan 3, then Germany, now Poland. We were in the central compound, Mueller was in the south compound. The POW camp was divided into four compounds. Each was enclosed with barbed wire so you couldn't see people from another one. Hilde was sent to the south compound about a month later. The Russians made a drive on the East front and threatened to drive past our POW camp so the Germans decided to move us to camp 7A at Mooseburg which was 30 kilometers from Munich. We marched to Nuremberg, Germany in winter cold weather, slept in barns with no food. In Nuremberg we were put in box cars so packed it was standing room only. We were then put in the POS 7A camp at Mooseburg. We met Mueller and Hilde again. We were liberated 4/29 by General Patton. We saw him with his pearl handled pistols.