

Frank Edward Vidmar was born on April 9, 1920 in Chisholm, Minnesota, where he spent his childhood. After a career of serving our country in the Armed Forces, he retired from Travis Air Force Base, California. Frank passed away on March 13, 2016.

Over Land And Sea

My Father's WWII Story

Lt. Colonel Frank E. Vidmar retired as a career pilot from the U.S. Air Force. His journey to becoming a military aviator, however, surprisingly started while he was an able-bodied seaman with the Merchant Marines during the Second World War.

In February 1942, Frank was on the oil tanker, MS Sun. Their ship left New Jersey heading to Long Beach, California to fuel up for the war effort. While sailing in the Caribbean Sea, on their way to the West Coast through the Panama Canal, a German U-Boat spotted them. The submarine, difficult to locate when submerged in attack mode, fired a torpedo while Frank was at the ship's bow on watch duty.

The torpedo made a direct hit on its target and exploded underneath the MS Sun's bridge. It blew a hole in the ship's side and caused the vessel to list in the water. For an unsettling moment Frank said he had wondered if the ship would keel over and sink. When the explosion from the torpedo occurred he heard an immense bang and saw a long, thick steel cable attached to the ship's mast completely snap loose and go whizzing through the air on a potentially deadly free flight. Fortunately it didn't hit him or any of the crew.

Because the MS Sun had not yet been loaded with fuel at their port of destination in Long Beach, the multiple containers on the oil tanker were empty. Thus, there fortunately wasn't a deadly massive secondary explosion of burning fuel that would have, in all likelihood, sunk the ship and taken the lives of those on board.

After the torpedo had struck, Seaman Frank heard the captain yell and urgently motion for everyone to get to the lifeboats and abandon ship. Frank, as he was the farthest from the crew, at the far end of the ship's bow, made haste and joined them in the getting in the lifeboats. Remarkably none of the crew sustained any serious injuries from the torpedo's impact and explosion or from the enormously heavy flying steel cable that had detached after the torpedo hit. The men deployed in their lifeboats a short distance away while they watched and waited for the ship to go down. Amazingly, though, it never capsized and sunk, and after waiting for a considerable amount of time, the captain gave the order to re-board the damaged vessel in an attempt to salvage the ship.

After the crew re-boarded the MS Sun, they pumped seawater into the empty side tanks on the opposite side of the torpedo damage in order to equalize the ship's ballast, as it was still listing considerably. They slowly made their way, albeit resting much lower in the water, to the Caribbean island of Aruba for repairs.

They remained in Aruba for several weeks until the ship's repairs were completed. After finally setting sail again, instead of continuing west to California, the MS Sun made its

way back to New Jersey, where their journey began. Upon arriving on the East Coast, Frank said it was typical for Merchant Marines who fulfilled their obligations on a particular ship's voyage, to be released from further commitments. So Seaman Frank had a choice to make on whether to reenlist for a new assignment on the MS Sun or sign up for a mission on a different vessel with the Merchant Marines.

At that moment Frank made a strategic career decision that would affect the rest of his life. He decided that he didn't want to be a seaman on a ship anymore, as a potential target for subs, but instead, would rather be flying high above the dangers of any German U-Boats. So he was released from the Merchant Marines to enlist in the Army Air Corps, later to become known as the U.S. Air Force.

Frank went to Stamford and Waco, Texas where he spent seven months going through Primary, Basic and Advanced Pilot Training. Next it was on to Tucson, Arizona, and then he ended his pilot training in Pueblo, Colorado flying simulated bombing runs.

After training, Lieutenant Vidmar was ordered to California where he left from San Francisco and traveled to Hawaii before ending up at Guadalcanal in the South Pacific. He was assigned to the 307th Bombardment Group (HV) flying the B-24 Liberator. Frank's departure date for overseas service was November 1943; one year from the time he started his pilot training.

The 307th Bombardment Group (13th Army Air Force) that Lt. Vidmar had been assigned to consisted of four Squadrons. When the 307th was at full strength, which wasn't always the case due to heavy casualties, it had about 12 bombers per squadron totaling approximately 60 B-24s for their group. The 307th Bombardment Group became known as "The Long Rangers" due to flying many hours of record-setting long-distance missions over hundreds of miles of open stretches of endless Pacific Ocean. If a bomber went down in this vast region of the Pacific, or a crew bailed out, there often wasn't a very high probability of survival or recovery.

It should be noted that U.S. Army Air Corps pilots were assigned to fly either in Europe or in the Pacific in the fight against Japan. However, by this point of the European war front, due to significant losses suffered by the German Luftwaffe, they didn't dominate the air as they did in the earlier years of the war. Thus because of the dangers due to the required long distance missions over the Pacific Ocean, there were quite a few American pilots who would have rather flown missions in Europe, although they weren't offered that choice.

Lt. Frank Vidmar flew a total of 42 active combat missions on the B-24 bomber, the plane officially designated as the "Liberator." This bomber was difficult and unforgiving to fly as well as notorious for fuel leaks. It thus earned the infamous nickname, "The Flying Coffin" by its crews.

It was on Frank's first mission, January 7, 1944, however, that very well could have been his last. Army Air Corps pilots had to fly their initial mission as an observer before they could fly a B-24 with their own crew. Lt. Vidmar was the observer, or "third pilot," as they were called, to experience his first live combat. Lt. Charles Byrd was the pilot and Lt. Burns Downey was the co-pilot. (See appendix for the Official Report of this event.)

The mission started out well enough as they flew in formation with the other bombers heading toward their target at Vunakanau, an island outside of Rabal, Papua New Guinea. Along the way, the flight crew noticed they were very low on fuel with nothing left in the B-24's reserve tanks. Frank said they never knew what had caused the fuel leak, although that seemed to be a common problem with the B-24s. Nevertheless, they were in trouble and rapidly running out of time. As the report succinctly states, "the gasoline supply was running dangerously low."

In addition to the fuel problem, the plane lost one of its engines, and to make matters worse they were heading directly into a weather front that could add significantly to their predicament. They broke radio silence and asked for permission to leave the formation to try and find a place to make an emergency landing. They left the safety of their bomb group and the bad weather front and headed toward the island of Choiseul. While descending to 1,000 feet they dropped their bombs in the ocean, threw overboard all of their guns and ammunition and any loose equipment to prepare for ditching the plane, or making a "water landing." This happened off the coast of Sarima Island near Choiseul.

Lt. Vidmar was flying as the 11th man, 'third pilot' observer, in the standard 10 man B-24 Liberator crew. Since there was no place for him to safely secure himself at the front of the plane, he left the cockpit and squeezed in and positioned himself between the two gunners. The two crewmen, who were strapped in with their harnesses, kindly offered for Frank to interlock arms with theirs, as they would try and support him when they crashed.

As stated in the report, "Lt. Vidmar, pilot-observer, lay facing the front, with his feet braced against a life raft which had been placed against the lower [gun] turret, and was grasping the arms of the two men at the waist positions." It may not have been the safest position to be in but there was little choice left for him.

Pilot Lt. Byrd made plans to ditch the B-24 in the water as close as possible off the coast of the island. As the large bomber, still traveling 'at about 95 miles an hour', crashed into the sea, the two waist gunners holding onto Frank had not quite worked out as the "seat belt harnesses" they intended to be, and the laws of physics took over. The report states what happened to the crew members during the crash and said, "Lt. Vidmar was thrown completely over the lower ball turret and into the bomb bay." He fortunately avoided being shredded by the jagged metal portion of the damaged undersides of the plane or smashing his head and shattering his spine on the plane's lower gun turret, or being knocked unconscious as he was propelled forward into the sea through the torn plane.

Frank said that he doesn't remember anything but the shock of being propelled forward into the ocean. He was stunned but came up to breathe once again. After coming up into

the plane through the damaged bomb bay, Frank said that he looked around and saw his fellow crewmen, the two gunners, throwing their survival gear out the side opening of the plane. Frank said he still remembered the surprised look of the crewmen as they saw him come up from the waters through the bomb bay where he had been ejected. It seemed that they were not sure they'd see him again. Frank joined with the crew in gathering all their survival gear and making good their escape from the sinking aircraft.

The crew had five life rafts that were inflated and put in the water with three of the rafts being tied together with the other two rafts secured to each another. All the crew were grateful to be alive as such wasn't always the case in an ocean ditching. The injuries the crew sustained were listed in detail in the report with most being said to be minor except for the co-pilot who suffered a severe scalp laceration on his forehead along with sustaining other injuries. Frank's injuries were shown to be "multiple minor lacerations of face, hands and legs, and back. Wrenching injury of Lumbo - Sacre region."

Co-pilot Lt. Downey was given first aid while he and Lt. Vidmar were put in one of the two rafts tied together with two crew members in the other raft. They were the first to paddle ashore while the report states, "Just as the last three rafts cleared the wing on the way to shore, the plane's tail tipped up and the ship then sank in about five seconds."

The men first landed their rafts on the island and spent a short time getting some needed rest from the traumatic ordeal along with first aid being given. But because of the thick jungle that didn't allow for much beach access, they paddled further down the shoreline until they found a sandy beach and landed their rafts. "They then suspended the parachute from the branches of trees to shelter the wounded, dressed their wounds, laid them on the overturned rafts, and made themselves as comfortable as possible for the night."

They built a fire and kept it going throughout the night where they were able to dry their clothes since it had rained for several hours before dark. In the emergency ration box there was an ax which they said came in handy for chopping wood for the fire. At one point they heard a plane searching for them but the weather was so poor that they weren't able to send a signal flare. However, they did try to signal with the emergency transmitter.

The report continues by saying, "Soon after sun up the next morning, they tried using the emergency transmitter again, quitting after about twenty minutes because of exhaustion. They saw two B-25's about ten minutes later, about five miles away, and Lt. Ladd fired a Very signal flare [Flare Gun or Signal Pistol] which they saw. The two ships buzzed the survivors and dropped emergency rations. One [B-25] stayed in that vicinity for a time, constantly circling them, left and then returned, and stayed with them until Dumbo [The nickname for a Navy PBY seaplane] came to pick the men up..."

The Navy PBY, or Flying Dumbo, designed to land on water, was arranged to rescue the crew. It meant staying longer on the island until the plane arrived to pick them up, but they were able to stay safe and remain undetected by any enemy while living off emergency rations. It was another day before the floatplane found them, landed on the water, and took the crewmen back to the aircraft carrier where they were returned to base.

When a plane went down during the war, the surviving crew members were given time for needed rest, recuperation and recovery from injuries. Thus, after getting back to base, Frank said the crew was offered the opportunity to spend a week in Sydney, Australia, recovering from their ordeal. All the crew members accepted this offer for much needed recuperation. That is, all except for Lt. Vidmar, who said that he wasn't about to go on leave to Australia because this was merely his first combat mission, and as a third pilot observer, at that. He wanted to fly. Two days later on January 12, 1944, Frank was assigned his own B-24 Liberator and crew, and they flew a successful mission to Rabaul.

Whether on land, sea, or air, all those on the battlefield of war in the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force were faced with considerable dangers and suffered many heavy casualties. The missions undertaken by the B-24s of the Pacific war front were no exception. In a memoir that was handwritten by Bombardier Lt. Woyciesjis (see appendix) on his March 26, 1944 mission to Eten Island (Truk) he wrote this comment, "This is a suicide (sic) type of mission... On way back - we had to sweat out every drop of Gas. We barely Made Green Is. - We had to strip plane of everything to make it to Green Is." Lt. Vidmar also flew that very same mission to Truk, and those words probably could have been echoed by virtually every B-24 pilot and crew flying in formation.

Lt. Vidmar continued flying his assigned missions over the South Pacific throughout that winter and spring while eventually taking the lead bomber position in June 1944. (See appendix for a description of two of the three missions Frank led.)

His 42nd and final combat mission piloting his B-24 took place on June 19, 1944. He once again flew to the Caroline Islands, the Truk Atoll. They had flown numerous missions to this important location in the South Pacific. In fact, of all the bombing missions he flew, 16 of these were to these strategic islands as they were a critical target in helping break Japan's stronghold on the region and its ability to control the South Pacific. (Bomb Plot Chart of this March 29 mission is shown in the appendix.)

Frank didn't recall specific details or say very much about the missions he flew or his being the lead on some of them. Even getting some of this information from him took years as the memories of the war and his flying days faded.

But an Air Force press release did indicate some specific details. On Lt. Vidmar's return flight back to base from one particular mission, their B-24 hit the runway for a safe landing with one engine shot out by enemy fire along with having a flat tire. And on yet another occasion, it states that Frank flew for five hours on three engines while going through several turbulent weather fronts with their plane being alone and separated from the safety of their fellow bombers in formation.

One strategic and memorable mission Lt. Vidmar flew was on the very first daylight raid on Truk. On this mission he earned the medal for the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), a very high honor. The following quote is taken from the Command of Major General Murray of the U.S. Army Air Corps. (Also shown in appendix)

Frank E. Vidmar, (O-680777), First Lieutenant, Air Corps, United States Army, Pilot, for extraordinary achievement during the first daylight bombing attack on Truk Atoll in the Caroline Islands, 29 March 1944. After successfully completing their bombing run on the heavily-defended Japanese airfield on Eton Island, the formation was attacked by 100 enemy fighter airplanes which engaged in a running battle which lasted forty minutes. In the early stages of the fight, Lieutenant Vidmar's number one engine started smoking heavily. Spotting the smoke and assuming the bomber was in difficulty, numerous enemy pilots pressed their attack. During the fight, Lieutenant Vidmar's crew destroyed three fighters and is credited with the probable destruction of a fourth. Although one of his tires had been pierced by a bullet he landed his bomber safely. Lieutenant Vidmar's cool courage and superior flying skill are credited with saving the aircraft and crew."

There was a moment that was forever etched in Frank's memory as he told it more than seventy years after one of his missions to the Truk Islands. Frank said, "On my way back from a bombing run a fellow B-24, flying as the number two in formation, with my bomber as the number one, took a direct hit from an enemy plane [Japanese Zero]. I saw the B-24's number four engine catch fire and watched until I couldn't see it anymore." Frank explained that this was the deadliest of situations for any plane and crew, and the wounded bomber, still on fire, disappeared from his vision in the cockpit while eyes from his crewmen remained on the wounded plane, watching sadly as it sank into the depths.

Frank said that none of the crew on that fateful bomber returned to base and there was absolutely nothing that could be done for them but to continue on and complete their mission. That is how quickly the end could come at any time and on any given mission for the brave men of the skies during WWII.

As is common with most of those from what has been fittingly been called, "The Greatest Generation," Frank Vidmar states, "I was only just doing my job." He was always quick to dismiss any notion that what he had done, or the sacrifices he had made, even at such a young age, was heroic. To the day he left this earth, he downplayed the part he had in the war and any of the commendations and medals he received from it.

Frank Vidmar is my father, and I'm proud to be called his son. His story is one among a multitude that can be told about the brave men and women of the 'Greatest Generation.' With the passing of time they are rapidly leaving us; so few of them are still among us today. May their stories though, like this one from our heroes of yesterday, continue to challenge and inspire a new generation of men and women, who would be as determined and resolute in strength and character, in propelling us toward a peace-filled and hopeful tomorrow.

RICK VIDMAR



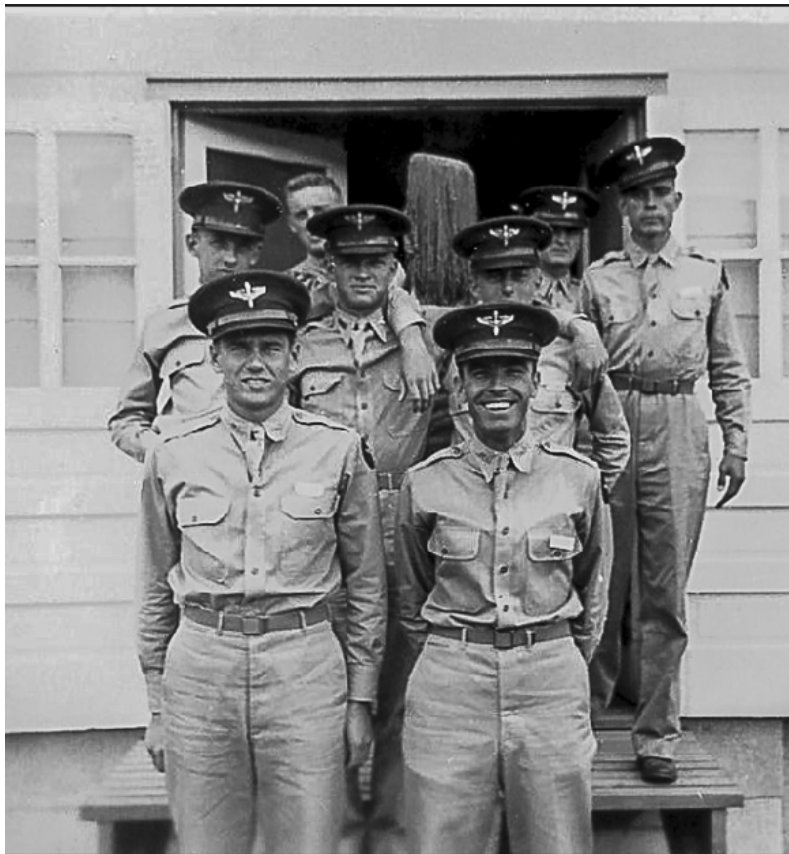
Lt. Colonel Frank E. Vidmar, Nov. 1966



Pilot Training for Frank Vidmar (standing)



Frank Vidmar at Medal Pinning Ceremony



Cadet Frank Vidmar front left



Lt. Frank Vidmar



1st Lt. Frank Vidmar, pilot, standing on the far right, with his crew in front of a B-24 Liberator during WWII



At Frank's headstone - Sacramento Valley National Cemetery, Dixon CA

SECRET

AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND
PACIFIC WING, STATION #11
Hamilton Field, California

SECRET
:Auth: CG, PW, ATC
:Init: CAC
:Date: 10 Nov 1943
: OHC/vam
10 Nov 1943

OPERATIONS ORDER)
NUMBER 55)

EXTRACT

* * * * *

2. PAC Ltr of Instrs, Hq, ATC, Washington, D. C., dated 4 June 1943, and suppl Ltr of Instrs, dated 10 June 1943, and Ltr of Instrs, Hq, PW, ATC, APO #953, dated 29 Oct 1943, and SO #305, par 2, Hq, AAB, Topeka, Kansas, dated 3 Nov 1943, the below-listed pers WP in designated mil ap from Hamilton Field, California, to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, in connection with Project No. 96323-R, Shipment No. FH --- AD, reporting upon arrival thereat to the CG, 13TH AIR SERVICE COMMAND, for further orders. Designated mil ap will also be delivered to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides. This is a perm change of sta.

Shipment No. FH --- AD 3

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|--------|-----------|---------|----------------------------|----------|------|
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | 2nd Lt. | VIDMAR, FRANK E. | 0-680777 | (P) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | F/O | BECKETT, CLAUDE (NMI), JR. | T-121894 | (CP) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | 2nd Lt. | LAWRENCE, RALPH B. | 0-683260 | (M) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | 2nd Lt. | FOTI, JOSEPH D. | 0-679192 | (B) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | S/Sgt. | CHARBONNEAU, HUBERT L. | 37307696 | (E) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | S/Sgt. | CASBEER, FRANK D. | 18025382 | (R) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | Sgt. | HUTTON, BILLY J. | 18165530 | (AE) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | Sgt. | VAUGHN, CHESTER C. | 15394286 | (G) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | Sgt. | MOORE, DONALD L. | 15332931 | (G) |
| B-24-J | #42-73323 | Sgt. | ROBERSON, RAYMOND G. | 11042214 | (G) |

Frank Vidmar's B-24 Bomber Crew with Deployment Orders



A WWII B-24 Bomber



Drawing of a B-24 with crew positions

Sun. March 26, 1944 ^{Maj.} Knebs 809

Strike - Eten Is. (Truck) 18,500m

Bomb. 6x500* AN-M43

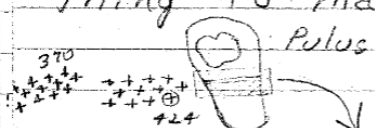
Did not bomb target due to
Navigation error - Bombed
Is. of Pulusk

Results - Good Bomb.

Comments - This is a suicide
type of mission

On way back - we had to
sweat out every drop of Gas
We barely Made Green Is. -
We had to strip plane of every
thing to make it to Green Is.

Pulusk Is. No - A.A.
No - INTERCEPT.



Log of Bombardier Lt. Woyciesjis March 26, 1944 Mission to Truk: Note comment about 'Suicide Mission'
Lt. Vidmar Flew This Same Combat Mission



A B-24 Liberator Flying on Mission over Pacific Island

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO #719

27 June 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER 78)

BATTLE HONOR

1. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec. 1, Bull. 22, WD, 1943) and USAFISPA Radio NR H4100, 23 June 1944, the following unit is cited by the Commanding General, Thirteenth Air Force, under the provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States, as public evidence of a deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

The 307th Bombardment Group (H), is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 29 March 1944 when it conducted the highly successful bombing of Truk, one of the most strongly fortified and heavily defended enemy bases in the South Pacific, and the key to the Japanese inner defense circle. This mission was in support of and coordinated with a Naval task force operating in that proximity, and had as its immediate objective the neutralization of Truk during our Naval action against the enemy. It involved difficulties and hazards greater than in any other single mission previously undertaken by units of the Thirteenth Air Force. To accomplish the assigned task, it was necessary that a flight of approximately seventeen hundred miles be made entirely over water, without any fighter support, and requiring thirteen hours and thirty minutes for its completion. Enroute to the target two severe weather fronts were successfully penetrated. From a navigational standpoint the flight represented a peak in achievement. Two squadrons with twenty (20) airplanes delivered a devastating attack against Eten airfield, the key airdrome in the Truk Islands, destroying forty-nine (49) enemy airplanes on the ground and destroying or severely damaging twenty-one (21) hangers, shop buildings and warehouses, and scoring thirty-seven (37) direct hits on the concrete runway, making it unserviceable. Immediately following this strike the formation was attacked by an estimated seventy-five (75) enemy fighters and for forty-three (43) minutes there ensued one of the bitterest aerial combats ever experienced in the South Pacific Area, during which thirty-one (31) enemy fighters were shot down, twelve (12) probably destroyed, and ten (10) damaged. The brilliantly successful attack by the 307th Bombardment Group (H) demonstrated the vulnerability of Truk to our land based bombers. The success of this mission, which struck such a devastating blow to the enemy; exemplifies the highest type of leadership, team work, and flying skill, and is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service of the United States.

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R E S T R I C T E D

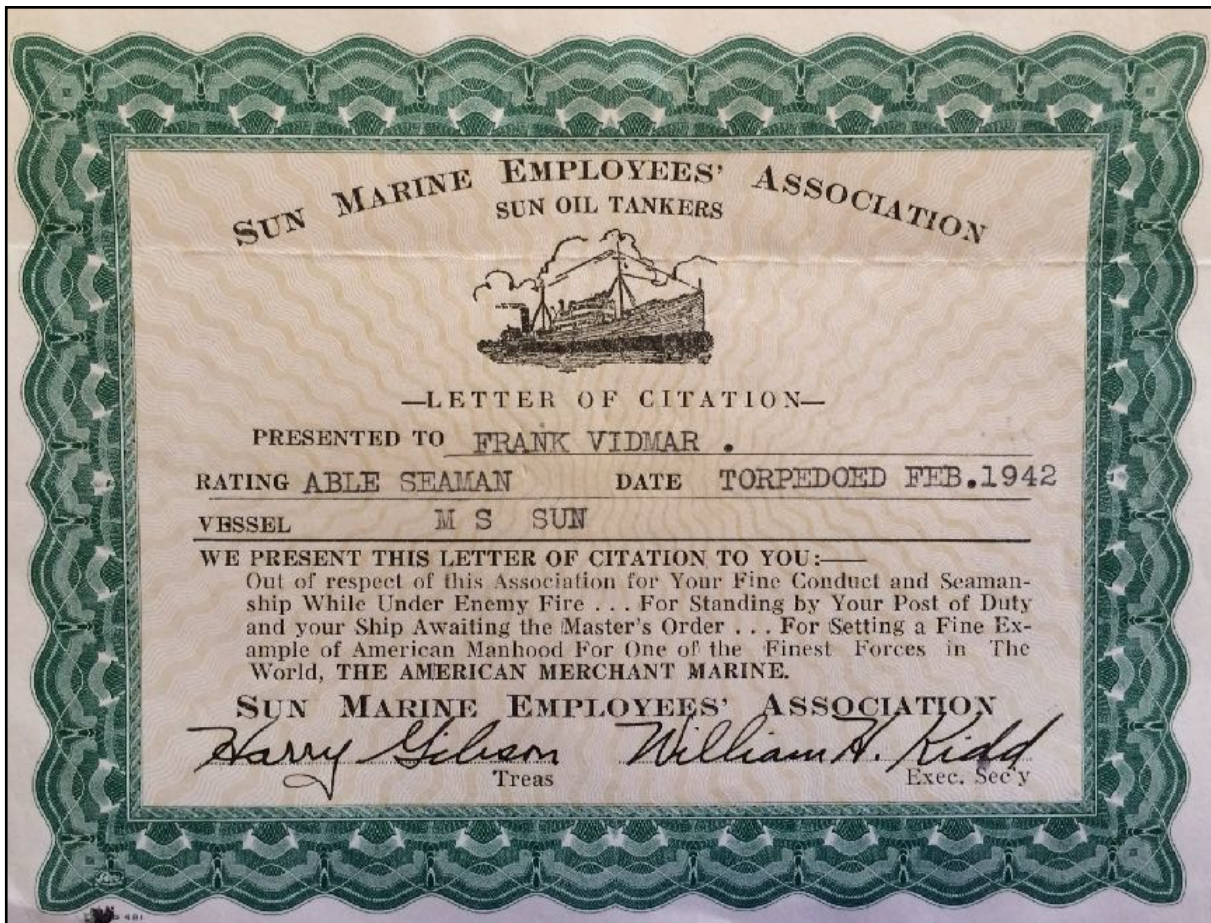
(i)

FRANK E. VIDMAR, (O-580777), First Lieutenant, Air Corps, United States Army, Pilot, for extraordinary achievement during the first daylight bombing attack on Truk Atoll in the Caroline Islands, 25 March 1944. After successfully completing their bombing run on the heavily-defended Japanese airfield on Eton Island, the formation was attacked by 100 enemy fighter airplanes which engaged in a running battle which lasted forty minutes. In the early stages of the fight, Lieutenant Vidmar's number one engine started smoking heavily. Spotting the smoke and assuming the bomber was in difficulty, numerous enemy pilots pressed their attack. During the fight, Lieutenant Vidmar's crew destroyed three fighters and is credited with the probable destruction of a fourth. Although one of his tires had been pierced by a bullet he landed his bomber safely. Lieutenant Vidmar's cool courage and superior flying skill are credited with saving the aircraft and crew. Home Address: 418 Fourth Street, Northwest, Chisholm, Minnesota.

By Command of Major General MURRAY:

A. J. BARNETT,

Frank Vidmar's Distinguished Flying Cross



Able Seaman Frank Vidmar's commendation on torpedoed vessel MS Sun



Frank Vidmar in his mid 90's



Frank Vidmar's Distinguished Service Awards &



THE FOLLOWING NEWS ITEM WAS RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION BY THE PUBLIC
RELATIONS OFFICER, HEADQUARTERS, 15th ARMY AIR FORCE, SOUTH PACIFIC

HEADQUARTERS, 15th AAF, SOUTH PACIFIC.—A Liberator tagged along with its formation over the target in the Woleai Group of the Caroline Islands recently on only three engines and tagged all the long, over-water way home alone.

For its pilot, First Lieutenant Frank E. Vidmar of 418 Fourth Street, Northwest, Chisholm, Minnesota, it was the third three-engine trip in a four-engine bomber in the many missions he has flown over enemy territory in the South and Southwest Pacific. It was the third three-engines landing too, which to all experienced pilots is never a safe or happy way to bring in a ship.

It all happened when the 15th AAF formation was turning in to make its bomb run over the tiny, supply-laden island jutting out of a coral reef in the middle of nowhere. The supercharger in Vidmar's plane began acting up, throwing oil.

They straightened out on the bomb run, and the bombardier, First Lieutenant Peter E. Burtchaeall of 2311 Oak Street, Jacksonville, Florida, opened the yezzing bomb-bay doors. The co-pilot, Flight Officer Claude Becktell, Jr., of 607 South Shipley Street, Elmsie, Indiana, was at the controls and Vidmar was regulating the throttles and myriad other gadgets to get the big plane into its racing run.

The ship was suddenly jarred, and a terrific vibration set in. The pilot and co-pilot looked out to see a cylinder of the number three engine blown out. The "knocked" engine was churning like a cement mixer and they had to cut off the gas and feather the propeller and continue the flight on the remaining three engines.

Sudden loss of pull on the one side caused the big ship to list and drop down 1,500 feet away from the formation before the pilot could pull her into control. They had only a few minutes before reaching the target. Burtchaeall already had the tiny island in his sights and was ready to loose his load of bombs. But Vidmar called him on the interphone and said, "We can't keep up with that load, so you'll have to let it bombs go now".

Burtchaeall was thinking hard of the gruelling ten-hour flight over the Pacific, and of the fact that the target was already crossing his sights. It was a bitterly disappointing thing to have to salvo those bombs when they were so close to completing their mission. But he hit the salvo lever and the whole load poured out of the bomb-bay and landed in the water, just off the coast of the island.

"I tried to console myself by thinking maybe there would be a secret Jap submarine base out there in the water but I guess I just killed a lot of poor neutral fish," said Burtchaeall.

On turning away from the target and watching the rest of the formation blast the little island till it looked as though it would sink, Vidmar's Liberator fell far to the rear of the formation. Two other ships from the formation fell back to give it cover until they were out of the enemy zone.

They flew for five hours on those three engines, through two weather fronts which completely lost them from their fellow bombers. The navigator, First Lieutenant Ralph E. Lawrence of 2314 Prinxrose Avenue, Fort Worth, Texas, brought them in right on the

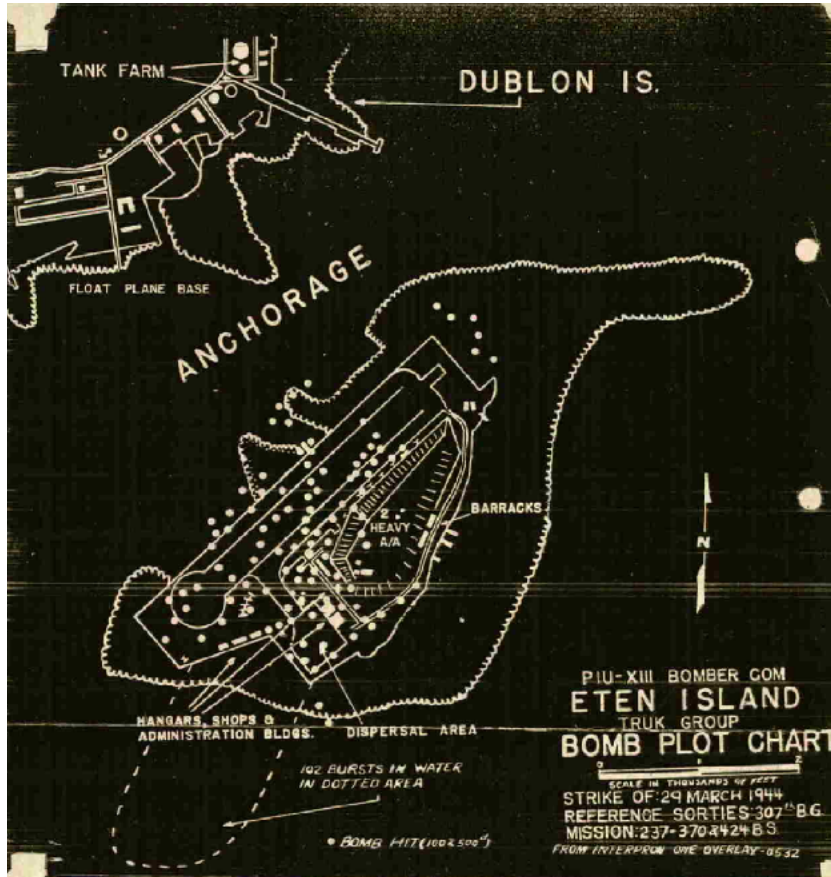
course, despite the weather and the loss of the other ships to guide them in.

Once before, Vidmar landed his ship at an advanced base after flying the first land-based daylight raid over Truk—-one engine shot out by ack-ack and one tire flat when they hit the runway. And another time, one of his engines blew a cylinder over Rabaul and he was forced to fly home and land at a base in the Northern Solomons on three engines. Vidmar believes he is well on the way to establishing a championship of some kind.

The pilot, Lieutenant Vidmar, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Vidmar of the Chisholm address. The co-pilot, Flight Officer Becktell, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Claude Becktell, Sr. Lieutenant Burtchaeall, the bombardier, is the son of Mrs. George D. Burtchaeall. And the navigator, Lieutenant Lawrence, is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence A. Lawrence of Valley Mills, Texas. Lawrence's wife, Mrs. Doris Lawrence, lives at the Fort Worth address. She is an employee of the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation at Fort Worth.

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(Passed for publication, U. S. Army Press Censor, 61400, U. S. Army Forces in South Pacific).



Bomb Plot Chart for Truk Island Mission



Area of Missions in South Pacific

SECRET

Paragraph 26 Ltr, 424th Bomb Sq (H), APO # 324, dated 2 July 44, subject, History of Organization (1 June 1944 to 30 June 1944) CONTD

On June 13, Lt. Vidmar led six (6) Baker 24's over Dublon Town. Bomb loads were dropped in the target and several large fires and explosions were seen. Interception by ten (10) to fifteen (15) enemy fighters was ineffectual and no damage was sustained by either side.

The Hanks area on Dublon Island, Truk, was the target for five (5) Baker 24's on 14 June. Led by Lt. Scott the target was dealt a blow that hurt. Again there was ineffectual interception by ten (10) to twelve (12) Jap fighters and moderate, heavy, inaccurate AA.

Dolon Island was bombed by Capt. Fowler's six (6) Baker 24's on 15 June. The primary target was covered by a 10/10 undercast. No results were observed. There was no interception nor AA.

Dublon Town, Truk, received another telling blow on 16 June. With Lt. Scott leading, our four (4) Baker 24's attacked at 1129 Z from 18,000 to 18,400 feet true altitude and blanketed the target area with heavy smoke and violent explosions. Unaggressive interception by ten (10) to twelve (12) Jap fighters and moderate, heavy and inaccurate AA was encountered.

Led by Lt. Vidmar on 17 June, six (6) Baker 24's again attacked Truk Atoll. This mission was especially successful and 60 of the 500# G.P. bombs landed within the target. A huge fuel explosion and fire was started just north of the tank farm on Dublon, and many smaller fires were ignited within the tank farm itself. There were still other fires within the target area. Fairly accurate AA fire was encountered and 20-25 Zekes with one (1) Tony and the usual Betty began interception 5 minutes before bombs away and it lasted for 25 minutes. The early interception was aggressive but after 2 Zekes had been destroyed their aggressiveness quickly faded.

The gunners of planes in positions A-1, A-2, B-1, B-2, and B-3, all collaborated in destroying a black Zeke which attacked from 1 o'clock high. The pilot was seen to bail out. S/Sgt. Hoyt A. Shanks, nose gunner on Lt. Hamilton's crew, exploded a Zeke coming in from 10 o'clock high. Two of our aircraft were slightly damaged by AA fire and one aircraft was damaged by interception.

Consolidated Mission Report Lt. Vidmar flew on February 12, 1944. A B-24 was shot down on this mission- All Lost.

HEADQUARTERS 307TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) GAP/ejl
Office of the Intelligence Officer

APO 717,
12 February 1944.

CONSOLIDATED MISSION REPORT NO. 307-212

DATE : 12 February 1944.

MISSION : This Group with two Squadrons to attack VUNAKANAU Airdrome runway. Alternate targets - best available targets in Rabaul area.

TARGET ATTACKED : VUNAKANAU Runway.

AIRPLANES EMPLOYED : All of 21 scheduled Liberators - 10 from the 424th Squadron leading 11 from the 372nd Squadron. All planes reached the target and all but two bombed. Lt. Carter's plane was shot down before bomb release and Lt. McConnel could not open bomb bay doors on bomb run and salvoed 2 miles East of the target.

ESCORT : 16 P-38'S and 8 F4U's from Torokina provided a good cover.

TAKE OFF : 0820 - 0900/L from Munda Field.

BOMB LOAD : Each plane carried 8 x 1000 lb GP bombs - 1/10 sec delay nose and tail fuse.

ROUTE AND ATTACK : Munda to Torokina to a point 04°41'S - 151°47'E to a point 04°26'S - 151°47'E to IP at the mouth of the Keravat River to target. Bombing formation a "V" of "V"'s. Target was approached on the heading of approximately 90° Mag. The 372nd Squadron had a clear run and bombed. The 424th Squadron made a second run on a heading of approximately 350° Mag. Because their portion of the target was obscured on the first run. Route home was direct.

WEATHER : Scattered cumulus 2/10 to 3/10 en-route. Weather over target good except for 4/10 low cumulus which obscured part of target on first run. Visibility good when bombs were released.

TIME AND ALTITUDE OF ATTACK : 372nd Squadron 1204 - 1205/L from 19,000 feet to 20,500 feet true.
424th Squadron 1210 - 1211/L from 18,800 feet to 20,800 feet true.

BOMBS DROPPED : 152 x 1000# were dropped on the target.
8 x 1000# were salvoed 2 miles East of VUNAKANAU.
8 X 1000# went down with Lt. Carter's plane.

BOMB HITS OBSERVED : 372nd Squadron:
A good pattern of bombs fell along the south edge of the runway and dispersal area with a concentration of hits at the west end of the runway at the junction of the end taxi strips with the runway. From 4 to 6 hits were noted on the west end of the concrete strip. 4 to 5 hits were noted along the taxiway and revetments in the extreme SW revetment area.

424th Squadron:
A good pattern of bomb hits started on the south edge of the runway at the east end walking across the entire runway and extending into the northern and north eastern revetment area. 12 to 15 hits were reported on the runway with an undetermined number on the concrete strip.

RESULTS : Two fires were observed with white smoke in the revetment area about 1000 feet north of the east end. A third fire was seen about 1000 yards west of this point.
The entire area where bombs hit was covered with dust and smoke. The eastern third of the r/w is believed to have been knocked out and substantial damage inflicted on revetments and taxiways along the south edge of the r/w and western most dispersal area.

AA FIRE : Heavy intense accurate AA fire was reported by both Squadrons. One plane was shot down by a direct hit and seven others suffered slight damage from AA hits. Fire came from charted positions and from a new position in the large supply and personnel area directly north of the center of the r/w. Heavy intense AA was shot up by two DD's in Keravia Bay.

INTERCEPTION : None of the eight to ten Zekes sighted over the target pressed their attacks home. This lack of eagerness on the part of the Nip pursuit pilots was probably due to our gunners opening fire on the Zekes while they were still about 1000 yards out.

The Zekes made the following attempted passes:

- a. Two passes from 2 o'clock low, broken off at 1000 yards.
- b. Two passes from 3 o'clock and level, broken off at 800 yards.
- c. Three passes were attempted on one of our planes, but the nose gunner drove them off at 1000 yards.
- d. One Zeke made a pass from one o'clock low but broke off at 1000 yards.

Four phosphorus bombs were dropped, but did not explode anywhere near our formation so consequently they did no damage.

The 372nd Squadron, the first one over the target, reported no interception.
The 424th Squadron, which made a second run on the target, reported all the attempted passes.

RADIO SILENCE : Silence was broken to send flash report by leader - "Bombs away 0111 GCT. Results good. Weather good. ETA 0340 GCT". Rogered for by 00B1 at 1337 LCT. Leader also rogered for forecast of winds over target from 00B1 at 1035/L. (Forecasted winds were from the south at 18 knots at 20,000 feet. Our crews after returning reported wind from 300° at 12 knots).
Contact reports on shipping seen were sent in and silence was broken to report Lt. Carter's crash. Otherwise silence was maintained until after leaving the target.

OBSERVATIONS : Simpson Harbor was reported to be lacking in its usual amount of shipping. The following ship sightings were made. The map references are for the N.A.C.I. COMSOPAC S1 chart.

Simpson Harbor:

- a. A small ship alongside a larger one sighted at point P-20.
- b. Ten barges were seen between point P-3 and point W-7.
- c. Two probable AK's at point T-2 which seemed to be anchored.
- d. One unidentified ship at point P-9.
- e. One large AK at point O-34, one at point U-25.

Heavy barge traffic seen in NE Simpson Harbor.

Greet Harbor:

- a. Two unidentified ships together at point II-26.
- b. Four long unidentified ships seen at points JJ-23, PP-24, PP-30 and JJ-28.

Keravia Bay:

- a. One DD at point O-66. This ship was firing heavy AA (contact report sent in by 7B27).
- b. Three AK's sighted at points J-63, K-60 and M-61.
- c. One DD seen at point GG-78 firing heavy AA vigorously.
- d. Many small AK's seen at points I-63 to N-73.

One AK seen at point AG-23. (Blanche Bay)
Many barges were seen on the South shore of Keravia Bay.

A large quantity of oil was observed to pour from the side of a tanker at point II-26 (Greet Harbor). Two bomb circles were seen in the water alongside.

Twenty-seven Bettys were sighted in the NE revetment area of VUNAKANAU. Many wrecked planes, some of them silver colored, were seen in the NW revetment area.

The Duke of York runway is still under construction.

Twenty-five unidentified AP were seen in the revetment areas of Rapopo. Lakunai was observed by several crews to be "burning beautifully".

One crew reported seeing an explosion in the middle of St. Georges Channel at approximately 152°E, 4°50'S at 1215/L. The same crew reported seeing a Dumbo with 8 P-39's circling at 1,000' at approximately 153°10'E, 05°20'S at 1236/L.

PHOTOGRAPHS : 98 photographs were taken. 47 hits were shown on the runway, 3 revetments were destroyed and several buildings demolished. 117 out of 152 bombs were accounted for.

BOMB RATING : Excellent.

OUR LOSSES : Lt. Carter's plane (AP#818) was shot down by a direct AA hit while approaching the target on the bomb run. The Liberator was hit in the wing on or near #3 engine and a large hole reported as being 3' x 5' large was blown in the fuselage near the wing root. Pieces of the planes skin could be seen flapping along-side the top turret. Two observers in other planes reported that 2 men bailed out but four other observers in different planes reported only one man bailed out. After being hit the plane seemed to drop in flight position straight down. It then fell off on the left wing slide slipping but seemed to gain partial control by turning to the left. While in this turn a parachute blossomed out. Two observers then saw the plane make another turn and a second chute open. Immediately thereafter the plane either exploded or disintegrated and crashed on the ground.

Opinions of observers differ on this score. Lt. Snyder reporting that a large explosion with an orange flash occurred, Lt. Link that the plane fell in flames then exploded about 3000' above ground while other observers reported that it exploded on the ground. At any rate it is certain that the plane was destroyed completely and should be of little Intelligence value to the enemy. The place of the crash was placed at WUNAWATANG plantation north east of VUNAKANAU.

One parachutist was shot at by automatic AA but it could not be determined if he was hit. He was last seen

floating down north of Rabaul Town. The other members of the crew were undoubtedly killed in the crash.

LANDINGS : 20 planes landed safely at Munda 1433 - 1500/L.

REMARKS : 1. Lt. McConnell could not open his bomb bay doors either from the nose or the flight deck until he was directly over the target. Bombs were then salvoed, landing in the jungle two miles east of VUNAKANAU r/w.

2. Very successful mission.

David B. Sharp

Jr

DAVID B. SHARP JR.,
Major, Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

Distribution:

Group Commander
All Squadrons
XIII Bomber Command (3 copies)
File

HEADQUARTERS 307TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF
Office of the Intelligence Officer

APO 717,
12 February 1944.

CONSOLIDATED MISSION REPORT NO. 307-211

424th Bombardment Squadron:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Capt Hansen (Col. Birchard) | 819 |
| Capt Ratti | 137 |
| Lt. Vidmar | 461 |
| Lt. Col. Burnham | 809 |
| Lt. Marshall | 262 |
| Lt. Pueppke | 285 |
| Lt. William Francis | 466 |
| Lt. Binder | 144 |
| Lt. Scott | 273 |
| Lt. McConnell | 215 |

372nd Bombardment Squadron:

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Lt. Faucett | 096 |
| Lt. Turner | 212 |
| Lt. Link | 788 |
| Lt. Mathers | 277 |
| Lt. Carter | 818 |
| Lt. Sawyer | 323 |
| Lt. Peters | 783 |
| Lt. Rifkin | 134 |
| Lt. Carson | 792 |
| Lt. Snyder | 822 |
| Lt. Novak | 119 |

CONFIDENTIAL

12 February 1944

First Phase Report #11B

LOCALITY: VUNAKANAU AIRDROME - NEW BRITAIN.
 SOETIE: 307th Bomb Group - Mission 212 - 372 and 424 Bomb Sq.
 DATE TAKEN: 12 February 1944.
 MEAN TIME: 1205 1205 1205 1205 1210 1210
 FOCAL LENGTH: 12" 24" 12" 24" 12" 12"
 ALTITUDE: 19,400' 17,100' 19,500' 19,600' 20,200' 20,000
 CONTACT SCALE: 1:19,400' 1:8,550' 1:19,500 1:9,800' 1:20,200 1:20,000
 LAST STRIKE COVERAGE: 9 February 1944, PIU - XIII B.C., First Phase Report #9B.
 MAP REFERENCE: H.O. Chart #10,840-2.
 QUALITY OF PHOTOS: Good.
 PHOTO REFERENCE: M-212, 307 B.G., 372 B.S., #10, 19, 21 - 424 B.S. #5.
 BOMB LOAD: 19 B-24's dropped 152 x 1,000#.
 ENCLOSURE: Bomb Plot Chart.

NOTE: Both squadrons crossed the target at 1205. The 372nd Squadron released its bombs, then the 424th Squadron made a circle and crossed the target at 1210 releasing its bombs.

AIRCRAFT: 15 fighter planes and 5 D/B in NW and SW dispersal areas. 25 M/B all in NE revetment area.

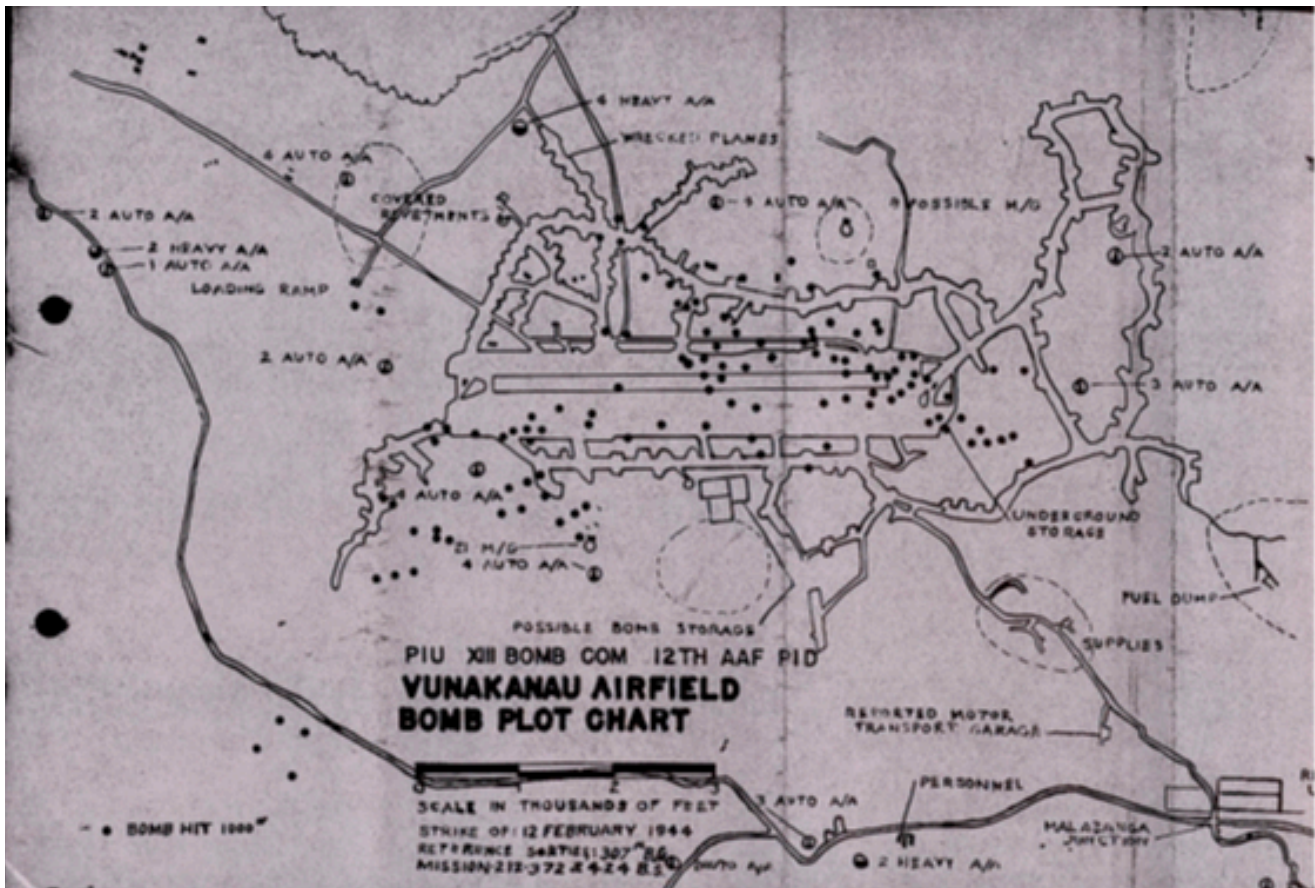
BOMB DAMAGE: 115 bomb hits visible on the airdrome.

| NO. OF BOMB BURSTS | AREA | PHOTO REFERENCE |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 47 | Hits on the runway. Seven of these hits were on the paved strip. Two fighters on SW strip probably damaged. (Runway unserviceable). | #5 - 424 B.S. #19, 21 - 372 B.S. |
| 28 | Hits in N central dispersal areas. Two buildings destroyed, 1 revetment destroyed, 2 fighters in revetment damaged. | #5 - 424 B.S. |
| 9 | Hits on taxiway leading off the E end of runway. | #5 - 424 B.S. |
| 4 | Hits on revetment area adjacent to the S side of runway. | #21 - 372 B.S. |
| 3 | Hits among M/G positions S of W end of runway. | #19 - 372 B.S. |
| 17 | Hits from SW taxiway to SW side of runway. Two revetments and taxiway damaged. | #19 - 372 B.S. |
| 4 | Hits 3500' SW of runway | #10 - 372 B.S. |

NOTE: The bomb patterns laid down by the two squadrons render unserviceable all but 2,000' of the NW end of the runway.

RLH

Henry W. Dill Jr.
 HENRY W. DILL, JR.,
 Captain, A.C.,
 Officer-in-Charge.



Bomb Plot Chart for Vunakanau Airfield Mission

SECRET

21
424TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF
Office of the Intelligence Officer
APO 709

COPY/ts

9 January 1944

REPORT OF WATER LANDING MADE BY 1ST. LT. CHARLES W. BYRD, PILOT, AND CREW OF B-24D AIRPLANE #41-24145, ON JANUARY 8, 1944.

As the gasoline supply was running dangerously low, we turned to the right off the southern tip of Choiseul Island and tried to reach Munda Airfield on a magnetic heading of 180 degrees. We broke radio silence to call Major Benson to leave formation. We flew for about ten minutes toward Munda, trying at the same time to determine if the munda field was open by calling Munda Tower, but received no answer. We were heading into a front as we lost number 3 engine, so thought it best to try a landing in the open, rather than in the weather ahead. We made an approximate 180 degree turn and headed back in the direction of Choiseul at 1,000', dropped our bombs "safe", threw all our guns, ammunition and loose equipment overboard, and then chose a good spot in which to land, about a hundred yards off the coast of Sarima Island, near the southeastern end of Choiseul. Sgt. Morrison turned the IFF to emergency position and ground station was able to take a bearing on it. Lt. Byrd and Lt. Downey broke out the side cockpit windows, Sgt. Levens opened the top hatch, and most of the parachutes were thrown overboard just before the ship struck the water.

The plane came down easy at about 95 miles an hour, headed towards the land. The water was so calm that no waves were visible until we were very close to the sea. The tail surface touched the water first, the ship leveled off, and landed with full flaps and wheels up. The weight of the plane forced the nose down and the nose immediately caved in. The top turret fell to the flight deck, but the rest of the ship remained intact and floated for about fifteen minutes after the landing, which was made at approximately 1400L. The plane then sank in deep water, taking the POF and bomb sight with it.

Lt. Byrd (pilot) and Lt. Downey (co-pilot) were strapped in their seats at the time of the landing. T/Sgt. Levens was sitting strapped on the Navigator's table with his back to the armor plate behind the pilot's seat. S/Sgt. MacKenzie sat on the floor by the left waist window, strapped in the engineer's belt, and T/Sgt. Morrison was sitting on the floor, strapped in the assistant engineer's belt, at the right waist window. Both men had their feet braced against the forward armor plate. Lt. Vidmar, pilot-observer, lay facing the front, with his feet braced against a life raft which had been placed against the lower turret, and was grasping the arms of the two men at the waist positions. S/Sgt. Jackson was sitting on a box of emergency rations, strapped in the nose gunner's belt, back of the right armor plate at the rear of the waist window. S/Sgt. Colangelo was in the assistant radio operator's belt, opposite Sgt. Jackson. Lt. Woyciejjes, bombardier, was in the bombardier's belt behind the camera wall, with Lt. Ladd in the navigator's belt opposite him, and S/Sgt. Septocki was in the tail gunner's belt, back of both the navigator and bombardier.

The ship stopped, floating at about wing level. Lt. Byrd believes he went out through the side window he had broken out, but Lt. Downey probably went out through the broken front windshield. When Lt. Byrd next saw him, he was holding on the number 4 prop, calling for someone to help him.

T/Sgt. Levens pulled the life raft release, inflated the raft, crawled out the top hatch and entered the raft. S/Sgt. MacKenzie's belt broke and he was

SECRET

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thrown on the ball turret. He immediately arose and began throwing out another life raft and emergency radio. Lt. Vidmar was thrown completely over the lower ball turret and into the bomb bay. Lt. Wojcieszek's belt broke. He tumbled over the camera hatch, went between the armor plating and landed on his feet and back between the waist windows. Both he and S/Sgt. Septoski crawled out the tail turret onto the upper fuselage and walked to the right wing where they helped to get the rafts and supplies in the water. The rest of the men's safety belts held. T/Sgt. Morrison helped to get the emergency supplies and other equipment out of the plane. S/Sgt. Jackson unfastened his belt after the landing and dove out the waist window to rescue Lt. Downey but S/Sgt. Septoski reached him first and helped him into a raft.

Five rafts were inflated and put in the water with three rafts tied together and the other two securely fastened to each other. Sgt. Morrison and Sgt. Septoski gave Lt. Downey first aid and put him and Lt. Vidmar in a raft. Sgt. Jackson then went back in the plane to salvage some emergency rations and the emergency radio. Lt. Downey, Lt. Vidmar, Sgt. Septoski and Sgt. Jackson were the first to paddle ashore. Then a parachute was salvaged from the wreck and the others followed them. Just as the last three rafts cleared the wing on the way to shore, the plane's tail tipped up and the ship then sank in about five seconds. The men used their sea marker as the rafts went towards the shore, but they thought that the color of the marker blended too well with that of the water to be seen from above.

The men came ashore at about 1430 L., gave Lt. Downey more attention and rested. Then, as the jungle was dense and extended to the shore line at that point, they paddled their rafts about 200 yards down the shore where they found a sandy beach.

They then suspended the parachute from the branches of trees to shelter the wounded, dressed their wounds, laid them on the overturned rafts, and made themselves as comfortable as possible for the night. An airplane was heard at about 1700 L, searching for them, but the weather was so bad that it was futile to attempt to signal it by any other means than by the emergency transmitter. It then rained for a couple of hours and darkness set in. The sea built a fire, kept it going all night, and dried everybody's clothing over it. The ax, found in the ration box came in to good use in chopping wood for the fire.

Soon after sun up next morning, they tried the emergency transmitter again, quitting after about twenty minutes because of exhaustion. They saw two B-25's about ten minutes later, about five miles away, and Lt. Ladd fired a Very signal flare which they saw. The two ships buzzed the survivors and dropped emergency rations. One stayed in that vicinity for a time, constantly circling them, left and then returned, and stayed with them until the Dumbo came to pick the men up at 1030 L., 1/8/44.

The EBI took the men to a seaplane tender at Rendova base and the following day, brought all the men except Lt. Downey and Sgt. Mackenzie to Malabo on Florida Island, landing there at 1100 L, 1/9/44. They then left that place at 1300 L. by boat to Brown's landing near Tulagi.

SECRET

LIST OF INJURIES ON LT. BYRD'S CREW:

Lt. Byrd: Wrenching injury to lumbo - Sacre region.
Lt. Vidmar: Multiple minor lacerations of face hands and legs, and back.
Wrenching injury of Lumbo - Sacre region.
Lt. Woyciesjes: Lacerations of palmar surface of right hand contusion of
left deltoid area and right posterior thigh.
Lt. Ladd: Multiple minor lacerations - of hands and left lower leg.
Sgt. Mackensie: Lacerations and contusion of the right lower leg and ankle.
Minor lacerations of scalp.
Sgt. Septowski: Minor lacerations of right hand.
Sgt. Celangelo: Minor contusion of left upper arm, and left lower leg.
Sgt. Jackson: Contusion of the left lower leg.
Sgt. Morrison: Wrenching injury of thoracic spine.
Sgt. Levens: Wrenching injury of cerebral spine and left knee and ankle.
Laceration of right shoulder and right hand.
Lt. Downey: Severe scalp laceration - Multiple face lacerations - Body
contusions - wrenched back.

SUGGESTIONS

Anyone sitting on Navigators table should place a parachute along his left side for protection against the top turret.

Suggest for all search planes to listen in on 300 kilocycles. (Navy Dumbos were unfamiliar with our emergency radio equipment and frequency).

Give exact coordinates when preparing for water landing.

LOADING LIST

PILOT: 1st Lt. Charles W. Byrd
CO-PILOT: 1st Lt. Burns F. Downey
NAVIGATOR: 1st Lt. Robert E. Ladd
BOMBARDIER: 1st Lt. Michael W. Woyciesjes
PILOT-CBS: 2nd Lt. Frank E. Vidmar
ENGINEER: T/Sgt. Harvester Levens
ASS'Y ENGINEER: S/Sgt. Ira B. Jackson
RADIO OPER: T/Sgt. Jack E. Morrison
ASS'T RADIO: S/Sgt. Celangelo, Dominick
TAIL GUNNER: S/Sgt. Henry J. Septowski
ARMOR GUNNER: S/Sgt. Harry C. Mackensie

ROBERT J. WILSON
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Intelligence Officer.

SECRET

-3-

C O P Y

XIII BOMBER COMMAND
FORWARD ECHELON
APO # 706

WAM/rrj

2 April 1944.

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, 307th Bombardment Group (H), APO #717.

1. The following messages are quoted for your information:

FROM: CINCPAC
TO : COMSOPAC
INFO: COMAIRSOPAC

DEFERRED
RESTRICTED

(READDRESSED BY COMAIRSOPAC FOR AS O20418 TO COMAIRSOLS)
010928

YOUR ATTACK 29 MARCH ON TRUK EXECUTED IN USUAL AGGRESSIVE
MANNER X WELL DONE

010928

FROM: COMSOPAC
TO : COMAIRSOPAC - COMAIRSOLS
312245

ROUTINE
SECRET

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM GENERAL MAC-
ARTHUR "YESTERDAYS ATTACK ON TRUK WAS A MAGNIFICENT PER-
FORMANCE WHICH REFLECTS THE GREATEST CREDIT UPON ALL CON-
CERNED X PLEASE ACCEPT FOR YOURSELF AND EXPRESS TO MAJOR
GENERAL HARMON AND HIS OFFICERS AND MEN MY ADMIRATION FOR
SO SPLENDID AN ACCOMPLISHMENT"

312245

FROM: COMSOPAC
TO : COMAIRSOPAC
INFO: COMAIRSOLS

ROUTINE
SECRET

310433

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE SPLENDID AND EFFECTIVE STRIKE ON
TRUK ON THE 29TH X PLEASE CONVEY A WELL COME TO ALL WHO
PARTICIPATED X HALSEY

310433

- 1 -

C O P Y

HEADQUARTERS
THIRTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO #719

In reply
refer to: AG 201.22

30 April 1944.

Subject: Message of Congratulations.

To : Commanding Officers, All Units, Thirteenth Air Force.

The following message from the Commander, South Pacific Force is quoted for the information of all personnel, and will be conspicuously posted on all organizational bulletin boards:

"28 APRIL 1944

WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VIRTUAL COMPLETION OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC CAMPAIGN, EXCEPT FOR MOPPING UP AND STARVING OUT OPERATIONS, I CAN TELL YOU AND TELL THE WORLD THAT NO GREATER FIGHTING TEAM HAS EVER BEEN PUT TOGETHER. FROM THE DESPERATE DAYS OF GUADALCANAL TO THE SMOOTH STEAM-ROLLING OF BOUGAINVILLE AND THE EASY SEIZURE OF GREEN AND EMIRAU ALL US AND ALLIED SERVICES PUT ASIDE EVERY CONSIDERATION BUT THE ONE GOAL OF WIPING OUT JAPS. AS YOU PROGRESSED YOUR TECHNIQUES AND TEAMWORK IMPROVED UNTIL AT THE LAST GRAND AMPHIBIOUS SEA AND AIR FORCES WERE WORKING AS ONE BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF PRECISION MACHINERY THAT CRUSHED AND BAFFLED OUR HATED ENEMY IN EVERY ENCOUNTER. YOUR RESOURCEFULNESS, TIRELESS INGENUITY, COOPERATION, AND INDOMITABLE FIGHTING SPIRIT FORM A BATTLE PATTERN THAT WILL EVERYWHERE BE AN INSPIRATION. AND A GREAT MEASURE OF THE CREDIT FOR THE SKY-BLAZING, SEA-SWEEPING, JUNGLE SMASHING OF THE COMBAT FORCES GOES TO THE CONSTRUCTION GANGS AND SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS THAT FULLDOZED BASES OUT OF THE JUNGLE AND BROUGHT UP THE BEANS AND BULLETS AND SUPPLIES. YOU NEVER STOPPED MOVING FORWARD AND THE JAP NEVER COULD GET SET TO LAUNCH A SUSTAINED COUNTER ATTACK. YOU BEAT THEM WHEREVER YOU FOUND THEM AND YOU NEVER STOPPED LOOKING FOR THEM AND TEARING INTO THEM. WELL DONE.

HALSEY"

By command of Major General HARMON:

/s/ John F. Concannon
JOHN F. CONCANNON,
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.