

# 41-29412

By

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Thursday May 25, 1944. During the allied air operations to destroy the communication complex of the German occupant in the south of France, two groups of B-24 Liberators from the Fifteenth Air Force, 55<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, 464<sup>th</sup> and 465<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups, dropped their bombs on Givors's railway junction, located at 13 miles south of Lyon, Rhône's valley.

Four B-24 Liberators from the 464<sup>th</sup> BG were very seriously damaged, three failed to return to their base of Gioia-del-Colle, in the Italian's Pouilles. The groups of American bombers were attacked on their return flight, by flak and the Luftwaffe, with Messerschmitt 109 and Focke Wulf 190 based in Istres, Salon-de-Provence and Channoines.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> plane lost was the B-24 serial 41-29412, nicknamed 'Strictly from Hunger', and was piloted by the Captain Robert W. Hornbaker.

Badly damaged by flak along the Esterel coast, the aircraft was attacked by four enemy fighters, one of them, a ME-109, while avoiding fire from the American turrets, dove and attacked again on the bomber's left, while shooting with his MG15 (7.92mm) and 20 mm axial gun.

The result: engine number #1 on fire (fire could not be extinguished), engine number #2, high mode lost and oil pressure dangerously failing and releasing incredible heavy, black smoke.

In addition, the left side of the fuselage was hit by various shots and main fuel transfer pump was destroyed, resulting in a loss of fuel from the left wing through the bomb bays. Several control cables were cut.

Unfortunately, the pilot was killed due to being hit in the head and thorax.

It was in this infernal context that the plane, now piloted by Second Lieutenant Raymond H. Burklund, fortunately safe, headed over the Mediterranean Sea while losing altitude.

As the B-24 crossed the coast it was hit by more flak, located in the Cape Roux, between Cannes and Saint-Raphaël.

Flying over sea, the B-24 was last seen far away from Italy near Corsica. It was at this moment that the co-pilot realizes that it was impossible for him to reach Corsica, as his plane might explode at any second!

Leaving his route and turning in a large curve on the left, the badly damaged B-24 goes right to Cannes, crossing over Lérins's islands.

The aircraft was then hit by the flak at Cannes. Four crewmen (including the co-pilot) bailed out. The plane goes in a spiral to the left and crashed on the hill of La Croix des Gardes, miraculously avoiding a disaster of hitting the city.

On July 4, 1976 a monument dedicated to Captain Hornbaker's B-24 was erected in Cannes.