

NORMAN LANE JR. MEMORIAL PROJECT

"FOR THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR IT, LIFE HAS A
FLAVOR THE PROTECTED NEVER KNOW."

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Emil Mateyak, Summer of 1940 or 1941. Between April, 1940, and June, 1942, Emil spent one summer working with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), in the vicinity of Teton National Forest in Wyoming. *Left*, Emil (far left, holding a two-by-four) with other members of his work crew. *Right*, Emil ("Me") and "Ed," walking near one entrance to the forest. Photos courtesy of Allan and Bob Jesko.

March 4, 2020

To Friends of Norman Lane,

In April, 1940, Emil Mateyak (<https://tinyurl.com/October-8-1943>) was living at home in Chicago with his widowed mother and two of his older sisters. He had graduated from Lindblom High School the year before, but he was still looking for work. Between that April, 1940, and his enlistment with the Merchant Marine, in June, 1942, Emil would spend one summer working with the Civilian Conservation Corps in the vicinity of Teton National Forest in Wyoming. He would also work with Liquid Carbonic and with Crane Co., both of which had invested heavily in major new plants on Kedzie Avenue in Chicago, two-to-three miles from the Mateyaks' Southwest Side (Gage Park) home. But in June, 1942, twenty-one-year old Emil had enlisted in the Merchant Marine (see photo, page 2). He would become a seaman after a three-to-four month training course at one of the US Maritime Service training schools. . . .

But instead, on August 22 of that year—two months after joining the Merchant Marine—Private Emil Mateyak enlisted in the Army. After almost seven months of indoctrination and training, now-Sergeant Emil Mateyak, the son of Slovakian immigrants, would be in B-17 crew training (Crew #10), stationed at Walla Walla (WA) Army Air Field. The date was Thursday, March 18, 1943, and Sgt. Mateyak was flying a training mission in a B-17F Flying Fortress, serial number 42-3068. His duty was listed as "AG," or Aerial Gunner. It appears that Sgt. Mateyak was serving as a Waist Gunner on this flight (see pages 13-14).

* * *



Emil Mateyak, Summer of 1942. Apprentice Seaman Mateyak, US Maritime Service, with his young nephew, Bob Jesko. Photo courtesy of Bob and Allan Jesko.

Also, in April, 1940, Frank Grubb (<https://tinyurl.com/October-8-1943>) had been living with his parents, Dell and Pearl Grubb, and his older brother George in Challis, Idaho. The US Census questionnaire, recorded over April 19-20, had two questions referring to educational status. First, "Attended school or college any time since March 1, 1940?" Nineteen-year old Frank answered, "Yes." Second, "Highest grade of school completed." Frank answered, "H4," or four years of high school. Elsewhere on the questionnaire, Frank indicated that he was neither working nor seeking work, because he was in school. In calendar year 1939, he had worked thirteen weeks as a "Farm laborer," presumably with his father during the summer months between school terms. Almost twenty-six months after that census report had been recorded, on June 11, 1942, Private Frank Grubb had enlisted in the Army in Salt Lake City—170 miles south of Challis. His enlistment record states that Frank had completed only three years of high school, conflicting with the census data from 1940, and no civilian occupation, prior to his joining the Army, is given. Three weeks after enlisting, on July 1, Pvt. Grubb would be in training at Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas, where he would be a member of the 403rd School Squadron, Air Corps Technical School. A full year would pass, but over the Fourth of July weekend, 1943, Frank Grubb's story would be continued. He and his older brother John, both home on furloughs from the Army, would be visiting their parents in Challis and Blackfoot, Idaho.

* * *

Emil Mateyak had been only ten years old when his father Paul, born in the village of Kostolné, Slovakia, in 1886, died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage at age forty-five. Frank Grubb's parents, Dell and Pearl, had been stricken on four occasions with the tragic death of a child—Albert in 1916, Wilma and Edward in 1918, and Lynnette in 1939. Although there are indications that Pearl Grubb had separated from her husband at some point, as will be discussed in a later installment, both the Mateyak and Grubb families had, in the main, persevered through the hard times brought on by family tragedy and the Depression.

Such does not seem to have been the case for Robert Redding. Two months younger than Emil Mateyak and six weeks older than Frank Grubb, Robert was born to Charles and Evelyn Redding in Bridgeton, New Jersey, on March 16, 1921. With the generous help of Camden, New Jersey, historian Phil Cohen, the following chronology for Robert's youth has been established. At the time of the 1930 US Census, when Robert was nine, his mother had married a second time, to Albert Cooper—twenty-three years her senior. Born in Pennsylvania, Evelyn A. Cooper had married her first husband, Charles Redding, when she was fifteen years old. Robert was born the following year. As of 1930, Evelyn was twenty-five and a homemaker. The Cooper family lived in a rented dwelling in Deptford Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey. Robert's stepfather had also been married before, and he had worked as a "Lather" in "Building construction." But as of the 1930 census, Albert Cooper was unemployed.

An article in the July 17, 1950, *Camden Courier Post* gave the names of four children born to Albert and Evelyn Cooper: William, Caroline, Evelyn, and Betty Jane. The 1940 US Census gives a clear indication for disruption within the Cooper household. All four Cooper children, ages three-to-eight, Robert's half brother and sisters, were listed as "foster children" with the Paxton family, also in Gloucester County. The census record indicates that the three oldest children had been living in the same town in 1935, but not



This photograph of Robert Redding appeared in the November 10, 1941, edition of the *Camden Morning Post*.

with the Paxtons. Repeated searches of 1940 census data for Robert Redding and his mother Evelyn are negative. Robert is known to have attended Pitman High School in Gloucester County for two years (most likely the 1935-1936 and 1936-1937 school years), and he is known to have worked in manufacturing at R.M. Hollingshead Corp. in Camden (Camden County neighbors Gloucester County). In 1942 he was working for Alex Stankus, who owned a roofing business in Camden County.

In November, 1941, twenty-year old Robert Redding was living at 412 Taylor Avenue in Camden, within a series of small row houses in a low-income section of the city near the Pennsylvania Railroad lines. Two Camden news stories, both reporting on events that had occurred early in the morning of Saturday, November 8, 1941, had these headlines:

Nab Camden Youths
In Wild Auto Chase

Six Camden Boys Admit Series
Of Robberies in Pennsauken

The second story, appearing in the *Camden Morning Post* on November 10, also provided photographs of four of the boys—among them was Robert Redding, age twenty, of 412 Taylor Avenue. The caption read:

Arrested after a wild chase early Saturday in which police fired shots these four youths last night admitted five months of robberies in and about the Airport Circle. . . . They are held without bail for the grand jury.

Four of the six youths were charged with breaking and entering and robbery. Robert and a seventeen-year old were charged with aiding and abetting. There is no further information on the conclusion of Robert's case.

* * *

Three months later, on February 16, 1942, Robert Redding registered for the draft—America had now been at war for more than two months. By this time, his mother Evelyn had married her third husband and had taken his last name, MacDonald. Robert enlisted in the Army on August 26, 1942—four days after Emil Mateyak had joined—over the first three months following his enlistment, Private Redding would undergo indoctrination and training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, Miami Beach, and Tyndall Field, Florida. The *Camden Courier Post* would report, on November 14:

Two Camden men have been advanced to the rank of sergeant after completing the course of training at the Flexible Gunnery School, Tyndall Field, Fla. They are Henry A. Popiolek, son of Mrs. R. Popiolek, of 1215 Lansdowne avenue, and Robert C. Redding, son of Mrs. E. MacDonald, of 416 Taylor avenue.



Sgt. Robert Redding's service photograph appeared in the October 30, 1943, edition of the *Camden Morning Post*.

Two Camden men have been advanced to the rank of sergeant after completing the course of training at the Flexible Gunnery School, Tyndall Field, Fla. They are Henry A. Popiolek, son of Mrs. R. Popiolek, of 1215 Lansdowne avenue, and Robert C. Redding, son of Mrs. E. MacDonald, of 416 Taylor avenue.

Over the next four months, Sgt. Redding would continue his training at Salt Lake City Army Air Field, Gowen Field, Idaho, and Walla Walla Army Air Field, Washington. Now-Staff Sergeant Robert Redding would be in training there, as a member of Crew #10, 88th Bomb Group, 318th Bomb Squadron, on March 18, 1943. His duty, like that for Sgt. Emil Mateyak, is listed as Aerial Gunner. It appears (see page 13) that S/Sgt. Redding was serving as the Tail Gunner on the training mission that day.

* * *

In April, 1940, twenty-nine-year old Anton Kohler was living in a place he rented on a farm in Bear Creek Township, Montgomery County, Missouri. With the generous help of the Montgomery County Historical Society, the following profile of Anton Kohler and his family has been assembled. Anton's parents, John and Nellie, were living with their four other children, ages eighteen-to-twenty-three, in St. Louis, sixty miles away. Anton worked, as had Frank Grubb, as a farm laborer—he had worked for the full calendar year of 1939, "on his own account," i.e., not for wages or as a salaried worker. Anton had completed two years of high school and had lived in St. Louis—presumably with his family—until at least 1935.

Anton's father had not worked in 1939 and indicated that he was "unable" to work. While Mrs. Kohler worked as the homemaker, the four children in the household had pitched in to help make ends meet. William, age twenty-three, had an eighth-grade education and had worked forty weeks in 1939 as a laborer in street construction, but he had been unemployed now for twenty-two weeks and was looking for work. Twenty-one-year old Charles had finished one year of high school and had worked all of 1939—as of the last week of March, 1940, he, sister Ethel, and eighteen-year old brother John were all engaged in "public emergency work," with the CCC, the Work Projects Administration (WPA), and the National Youth Administration (NYA). Only William and Charles had worked for most or all of 1939, and Ethel and John had both experienced significant lapses in employment prior to that last week of March, 1940.



Staff Sergeant Anton Kohler. *Left*, service photograph as it appeared in the October 20, 1943, edition of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. *Right*, S/Sgt. Kohler is standing in this photograph of an earlier crew that he flew with.

Only five months after Anton Kohler was surveyed for the US Census, with the drums of war beating even more ominously in both Europe and Asia, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 into law—the first peacetime draft in US history. At the time, all men between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five were required to register. And so, on October 16, 1940—three weeks before his thirtieth birthday—Anton Kohler registered for the draft. Frank Grubb had enlisted in the Army on June 11, 1942, and Emil Mateyak had joined the Merchant Marine later that month. Now, on June 29, 1942, thirty-one-year old Anton Kohler enlisted in the Army at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri—twelve miles from his parents' home.

After several weeks of basic instruction there, Private Kohler's training itinerary would take him to the Army Air Field at Salt Lake City, to Gowen Field, Idaho, and to Walla Walla Army Air Field. Anton Kohler and Robert Redding would overlap at Gowen Field for almost eight weeks—from January 11–March 4, 1943—where both would train with the 29th Bomb Group, 43rd Bomb Squadron. Both men would begin their next assignments, on March 4, at Walla Walla Army Air Field. There, on March 18, 1943, Sgt. Anton Kohler ["Assistant Radio Operator," ("AR," usually, the Ball Turret Gunner)] and S/Sgt. Robert Redding would be flying with Sgt. Emil Mateyak as three members of the ten-man training crew, Crew #10, 88th Bomb Group, 318th Bomb Squadron. Exactly twenty-two weeks later, Anton Kohler, Robert Redding, and Emil Mateyak—Ball Turret Gunner, Waist Gunner, and Tail Gunner—would fly together on another B-17F Flying Fortress, serial number 42-3328, "Miss Fortune," with the 390th Bomb Group, 568th Bomb Squadron. But this would be no training mission over the friendly skies of the American Northwest. For on Thursday, August 19, 1943, "Miss Fortune" would be carrying her crew into battle over the skies of Nazi-occupied Holland; this would be their first combat mission.

* * *

Four weeks before Sgts. Kohler, Redding, and Mateyak had entered their aircraft at Redmond, Oregon, Army Air Field for that March 18 training mission, 2ndLt. Owen Burgess (<https://tinyurl.com/October-8-1943> and <https://tinyurl.com/December-11-1941>) had received his navigator's wings with Class 43-3 at Army Air Forces Navigation School, Hondo (TX) Army Air Field. 2ndLt. Burgess' next assignment would take him to Boise, Idaho—about 120 miles southwest of Frank Grubb's hometown of Challis. Years later, Owen Burgess wrote about his time at Boise (Gowen Field):

From Hondo I was sent to Boise Idaho where I joined my B-17 crew. The pilot was Hiram C. Skogmo, Alvin Jaspers, Co-Pilot, and Merle C. Cloud of Rule, Texas, the Bombardier. . . .

In July, 1968, Owen Burgess would remember Hiram C. Skogmo and Merle C. Cloud in his editorial tribute to a nineteen-year old Army medic from Haywood County, Tennessee, who had died in Vietnam (<https://tinyurl.com/October-8-1943>, pages 1-2):

Old memories flooded back, almost to tears when the Colonel read the orders of commendation. . . . "his display of personal bravery and devotion to duty". . . .

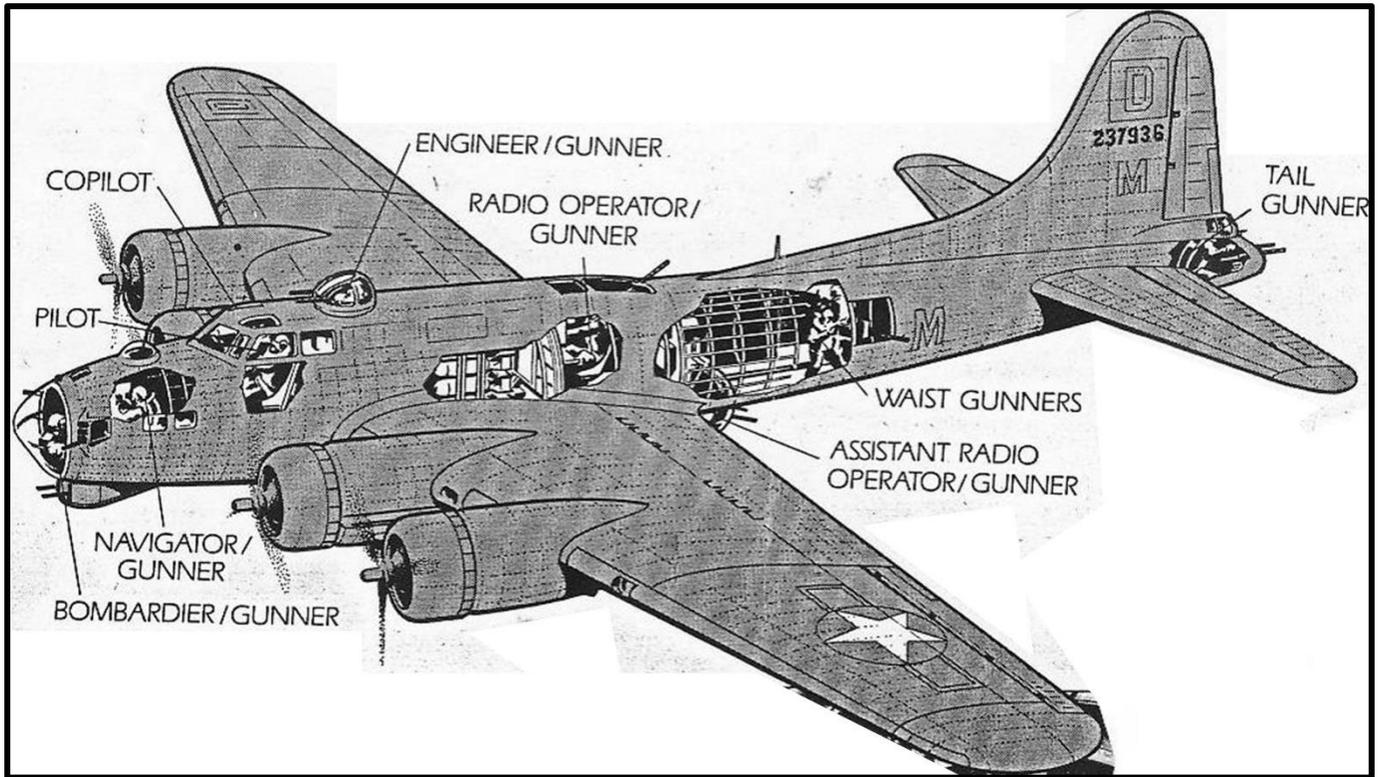
Our memories went back to Hiram C. Skogmo of Milwaukee, Wade Hampton Sneed of Georgia and Merle C. Cloud of Rule, Texas, and many many more comrades and friends of the 390th Bomb Group . . .

In his memoir, Owen Burgess recorded one more distinct recollection from his time in Boise, during 1943:

While in Boise we flew one night with movie star, Jimmy Stewart who was an instructor pilot at the time. He later became a General in the Reserve.

Second Lieutenant Harry Gorden (<https://tinyurl.com/October-8-1943> and <https://tinyurl.com/December-11-1941>) had received his bombardier's wings with Class 42-13 at Midland (TX) Army Flying School (Bombardier) on September 24, 1942. Over February and March, 1943, he was continuing his assignment at Big Spring (TX) Flying School (Bombardier), where he would serve as an Instructor until April.

* * *



Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and duties for the ten-man crew. Note that 1stLt. Owen Burgess and the crew of "Miss Fortune" trained and flew combat missions in the B-17F model, which lacked the nose turret gun shown here for the later G model (and some very late F models). For additional details, see the text.

The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress carried a ten-man crew. Bombardier and navigator both sat in the nose of the aircraft (see diagram, above), forward of the positions occupied by the pilot and copilot. All four of these men were officers. Just aft of the flight deck were the flight engineer, who doubled as the top turret gunner, and the radio operator, who was also responsible for a mounted .50-caliber machine gun. Continuing toward the tail section of the aircraft, there were four additional gun positions—the ball turret gunner, who operated from his perch beneath the fuselage, the two waist gunners, one on each side of the aircraft, and the tail gunner. All six of these duties were carried out by enlisted men. With reference to the combat crew that would fly "Miss Fortune" (see page 5) into her first engagement over enemy territory on August 19, six of the ten men have been introduced: 1stLt. Owen Burgess, navigator, 1stLt. Harry Gorden, bombardier, S/Sgt. Anton Kohler, ball turret gunner, S/Sgts. Frank Grubb and Robert Redding, waist gunners, and S/Sgt. Emil Mateyak, tail gunner.

But in March, 1943, Lt. Burgess was flying with the crew of Lt. Hiram Skogmo, based at Gowen Field, Idaho. Lt. Gorden was serving as an Instructor at Big Spring Flying School. Sgts. Kohler, Redding, and Mateyak were flying with Crew #10, 88th Bomb Group, 318th Bomb Squadron, based at Walla Walla, Washington. Their mission that Thursday, March 18, was formation bombing in which the pilot would also accumulate additional time flying instruments. The aircraft underwent its preflight inspection, was serviced with fuel and oil, and was loaded with ten 100-pound practice bombs and 600 rounds of .50-caliber ammunition. The pilot was 2ndLt. Charles Hull, the navigator was 2ndLt. Robert Henry, and the bombardier was 2ndLt. Albert Combs. S/Sgt. Calvin Butler was the flight engineer, and S/Sgt. Craig Ellis, whose duty was listed as "Assistant Engineer," was probably one of the waist gunners.

In addition to Sgts. Kohler, Mateyak, and Redding, two other members of Crew #10 that day would also be flying "Miss Fortune" into combat five months later. The copilot was Flight Officer Joseph Carter from

Texarkana, Arkansas—he had observed his twenty-second birthday five days before. After the war, "Ed" Carter would leave the service as a major, return to Texarkana, and marry his childhood sweetheart. He would have seventy more years to reflect on his time with the AAF and, later, the 390th Bomb Group, before passing away in 2016 at age ninety-five. The radio operator was S/Sgt. Michael Urban, age twenty-eight. Born in Toronto, the son of Albert and Anna Urbanowski had shortened his family name in the late 1930s; he and his wife Gloria were living in Detroit at the time of his enlistment, on June 3, 1942.

The crew entered their B-17F at Redmond Army Air Field, and at 1:15 p.m. they took off for the local flight. The weather was "CAVU," or "ceiling and visibility unlimited." But what was planned as a routine B-17 crew training flight would depart, significantly, from the script.

* * *

Prior to their assignments at Walla Walla Army Air Field, S/Sgt. Robert Redding and Sgt. Anton Kohler had overlapped for almost eight weeks at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. Both men trained there, with the 29th Bomb Group, 43rd Bomb Squadron. When Sgt. Kohler reported at Gowen Field on September 17, 1942, the Group had only recently (June 20) relocated from MacDill Field, Florida. Over the period



B-17s at Gowen Field, Idaho: "inspection on ramp." This official photograph is dated April 10, 1942. The 29th Bomb Group would complete its cross-country move to Gowen on June 20, and Sgt. Anton Kohler would report for duty there on September 17.

September 1, 1942, to the end of February, 1943, the complement of officers and enlisted men assigned to the Group grew dramatically—the number of officers in the 43rd Bomb Squadron tripled (from 77 to 247), and the enlisted ranks for the Squadron almost doubled (from 382 to 730).

In February, 1942, the Second Air Force, which would remain the principal center for developing heavy (B-17 and B-24) and very heavy (B-29) bombardment groups, had adopted an operational training unit (OTU) system, developed in order to ensure an even distribution of experienced AAF personnel between the requirements for the combat and training theaters. As summarized by Thomas Greer in one chapter from *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds.):

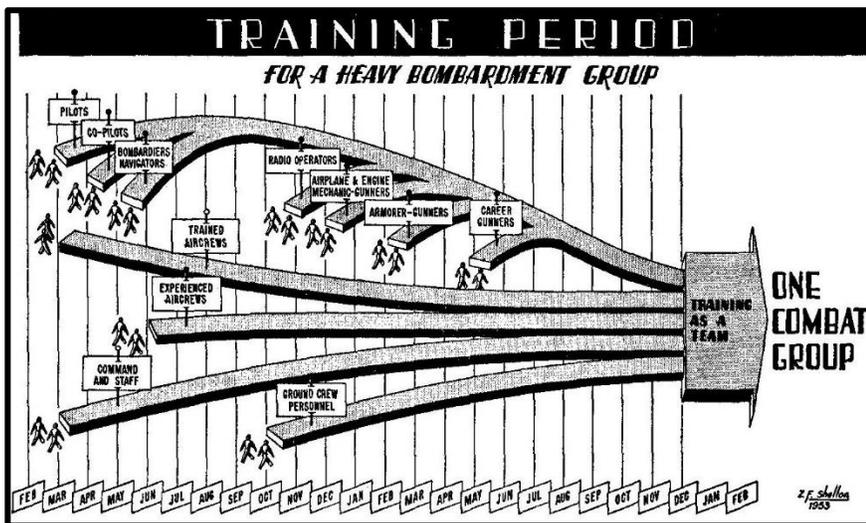
Certain groups [would] be designated parent groups, with authorized overstrength . . . [and] would provide cadres for newly activated or satellite groups and . . . would assume responsibility for their training. Graduates of the training schools would be used to bring the satellite groups to authorized strength and . . . to restore the parent group to its overstrength.

In September, 1943, the Office of the Intelligence Officer, 29th Bomb Group, Gowen Field, prepared a "History of the 29th Bombardment Group (H) AAF: 7 December 1941 to 31 December 1942." That document provides the following statement:

The 29th is a parent group specializing in first phase training. During this period all personnel processed by the 29th were given first phase training, no more, no less.

The primary task of the OTU system was the training of heavy bombardment crews and units. Approximately 27,000 heavy bombardment crews were trained from December, 1942, to August, 1945, with B-17 crews representing slightly less than half of that number. From Thomas Greer's chapter on "Combat Crew and Unit Training:"

The Second Air Force, which conducted the major portion of heavy bombardment training, divided it into three principal phases. Until the end of 1943 each of the phases was usually given at a different base, but that arrangement was then abandoned in favor of giving the entire program at one OTU station. During the first phase, individual crew members received instruction in their specialties, particular attention being given to instrument and night flying exercises for pilots, cross-country tests for navigators, target runs for bombardiers, and air-to-air firing for gunners.



There is no evidence that Anton Kohler and Robert Redding actually met during their first-phase training with the 29th Bomb Group, early in 1943. Redding had completed Flexible Gunnery School at Tyndall Field the previous November; at that time, and until December, 1942, this training had only been open to volunteers. In a separate chapter titled "Individual Training of Flying Personnel," Thomas Greer states that all of the enlisted members of bombardment crews were required to have flexible gunnery training. Given that Redding and Kohler would both be designated "career" gunners, Sgt.

Flowchart for the integration of individual and combat crew and unit training activities for one heavy bombardment group. Adapted from "Combat Crew and Unit Training," by Thomas Greer, in *The Army Air Forces in World War II* (Craven and Cate, eds.).

Kohler had undoubtedly undergone training similar to that S/Sgt. Redding had completed. In any event, their first-phase training with the 29th Bomb Group at Gowen, with its emphasis on "air-to-air firing for gunners," would have honed those skills. One statement from Greer's chapter on individual training underscores the importance of their specialized duties:

Every member of the combat crew had a vital responsibility in executing the aircraft's mission. When a bomber was under attack by hostile fighters, it was the aerial gunner who defended the lives of his teammates; on the skill he had developed rested the fate of the crew.

On Monday, March 1, 1943, and again on Wednesday, March 3, Sgt. Anton Kohler visited the dental clinic at Gowen Field. On Thursday, March 4, both he and S/Sgt. Robert Redding departed Gowen, as

ordered, for their new assignments at Walla Walla. Two Thursdays later, they would enter their B-17F together for a routine local training mission.

* * *

We have no information on the training itinerary that led Emil Mateyak from his August 22, 1942, induction to Walla Walla, seven months later. Like Robert Redding and Anton Kohler, Emil was designated as a career gunner, so we presume he had undergone special training in that duty. But Redding held an advantage in rank; as of March 18, 1943, he had been awarded the grade of Staff Sergeant, while Kohler and Mateyak were Sergeants. According to Thomas Greer, the policy regarding enlisted men and their respective grades while attending gunnery schools varied:

Beginning in 1943 graduates who had previously completed a course of specialized technical training were awarded the grade of sergeant; those who had not were made privates first class and were promoted to sergeant upon completing a technical specialty.

Robert Redding had been promoted to Sergeant on completion of Flexible Gunnery School in November, and in March his rank was Staff Sergeant. Kohler and Mateyak had been in the service for as long as, or longer, than Redding. As Greer states, the policy varied. Regardless of rank, all three were now members of Crew #10, 88th Bomb Group, 318th Bomb Squadron.

The 88th Bomb Group had been activated at Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington, on September 1, 1942. The fall of 1942 saw two temporary changes of station for the Group—first, to Walla Walla, and then on October 26, to Rapid City, South Dakota, Army Air Field. There, as a parent Group, the 317th and 318th Bomb Squadrons furnished the nuclei for establishing the 383rd Bomb Group. Having completed this task, the 88th returned to Walla Walla on November 26—the "depleted" 318th was "resuscitated" on December 1, with the 317th being revived on January 1, 1943. In preceding sections there have been references to both Walla Walla and Redmond Army Air Fields as locations for S/Sgt. Robert Redding and Crew #10 of the 318th in March, 1943. From the "History of the 88th Bombardment Group (H): Army Air Field, Walla Walla, Wash.," dated September 19, 1943:

Training as a practical matter was started at the satellite base at REDMOND, OREGON, where the 318th Squadron [to which S/Sgt. Redding and Crew #10 would be assigned] had proceeded on December 5, 1942 after its rebirth four days earlier. . . .

To assist in the training, some eight crews were attached from the 100th Bombardment Group (H) to furnish flight commanders and instructor crews. Two of these crews were assigned to REDMOND, OREGON.

From September 1, 1942 to March 1, 1943 Lieutenant Colonel Edgar M. Wittan (see photo, page 10) was commanding officer of the 88th Bombardment Group (H) [Wittan had been Operations Officer for the 29th Bomb Group for a short period in January, 1942. His star would rise even more rapidly in the coming months of 1943 and into 1944, as will be discussed later. The Executive Officer for the 29th at that time was then-Major Robert Travis, after whom Travis Air Force Base would later be named].

The 88th Bombardment Group (H) is concerned with second and third phase training.

From Thomas Greer's previously-cited chapter on "Combat Crew and Unit Training:"

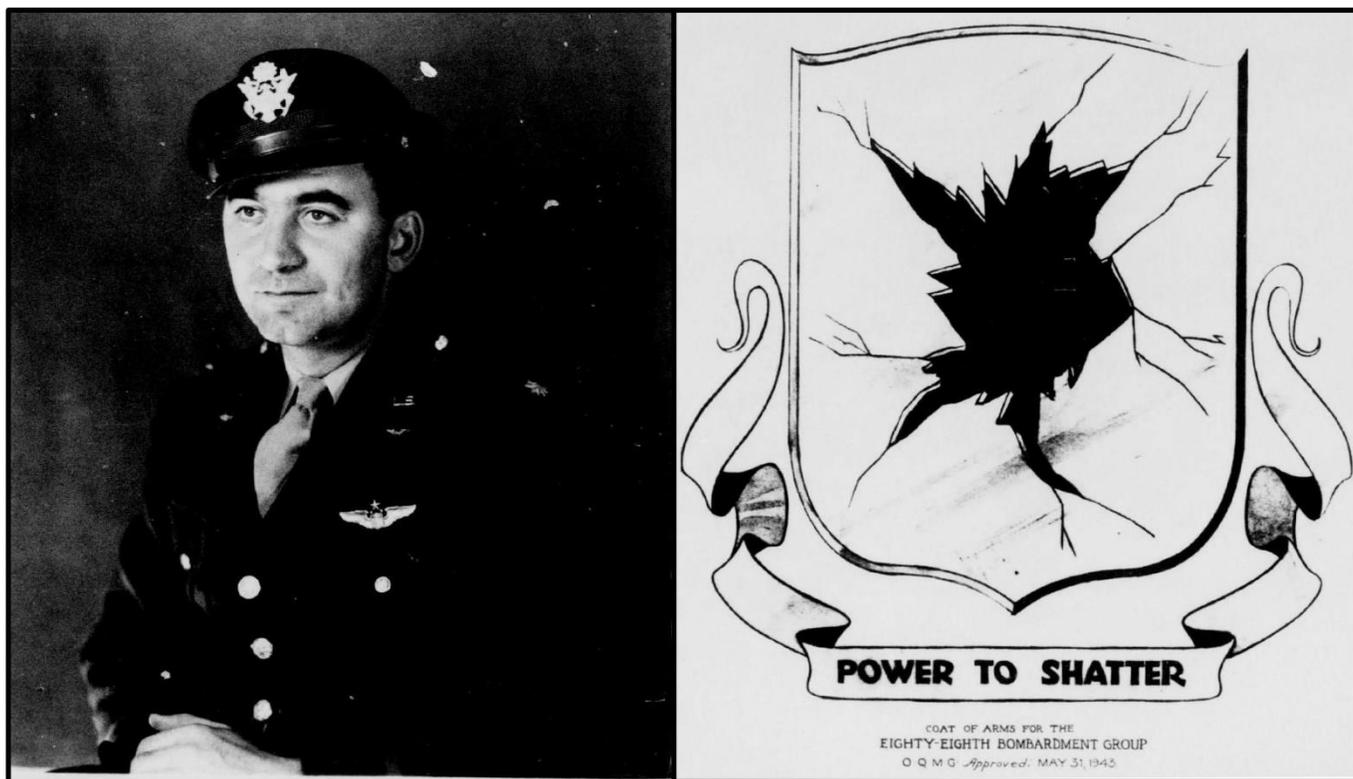
During the first phase, individual crew members received instruction in their specialties, particular

attention being given to instrument and night flying exercises for pilots, cross-country tests for navigators, target runs for bombardiers, and air-to-air firing for gunners. During the second phase, teamwork of the combat crew was stressed: bombing, gunnery, and instrument flight missions were performed by full crews. The third phase aimed at developing effective unit operation, the goal of the entire program. It included extensive exercises in high-altitude formation flying, long-range navigation, target identification, and simulated combat missions.

Adding to this was the participation, in 1943, of crews returning from the combat theaters. As stated in the September, 1943, interim historical account for the 88th Bomb Group:

It can be definitely said that the experience derived from personnel returned from combat and incorporated in the directives [from higher echelons] just mentioned has improved the training program of the Group.

The interim history includes a number of photographs, a sketch of the Group's official coat of arms (see below), and several detailed rosters for the officers with the Group—assigned, unassigned but attached, and those with Provisional Groups. These rosters begin, as dated, on September 15, 1942, soon after the activation of the Group at Geiger Field, and continue over February 15-September 13, 1943, at Walla Walla, in most cases at monthly intervals. Between February 15 and March 15, Major Hewitt Wheless replaced LtCol. Edgar Wittan as Group Commander; the situation necessitating this change will be discussed in a future installment.



Left, Then-LtCol. Edgar M. Wittan was commanding officer of the 88th Bombardment Group (H) from its activation on September 1, 1942, until March 1, 1943, when he assumed command of the new 390th Bomb Group. Owen Burgess would serve on one of the original crews of the 568th Squadron of that new Bomb Group. As commander of the 13th Combat Wing, Col. Wittan would perish in an air accident over Great Britain on September 13, 1944. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. *Right*, Coat of arms for the 88th Bomb Group, approved by the War Department during LtCol. Wittan's term as commanding officer.

The April 1 roster would include the name of a twenty-one-year old Second Lieutenant, attached to the 88th Bomb Group, who had received his pilot's wings only six weeks before. His name was John Luckadoo (you can read an interview with Mr. Luckadoo, published online in November, 2019, [here](#)), he later flew combat missions with the 100th Bomb Group, and you may have seen his interview on camera for the recent *Memphis Belle in Color* documentary on the Smithsonian Channel.

The March 15 roster, under the category, "Air Corps Unassigned, Attached to the 88th Bombardment Group (H)," lists 136 Second Lieutenants and nine Flight Officers. Among them are the four officers who would fly with Crew #10, 318th Squadron, on March 18. 2ndLt. Charles Hull was twenty-one and had received his pilot's wings on November 10, 1942. Flight Officer Joseph Carter (see pages 6-7) was twenty-two and had received his pilot's wings only one month before. On the March 18 training mission, with Sgts. Redding, Kohler, and Mateyak as three of the gunners and Sgt. Urban as the radio operator, 2ndLt. Hull and F/O Carter would be pilot and copilot, respectively. 2ndLt. Robert Henry had received his navigator's wings one month before Owen Burgess—he was only twenty years old. All three of these young officers were single, but the bombardier, twenty-six-year old 2ndLt. Albert Combs, was married. None of these four men had appeared on the February 15 roster for the Group, and only 2ndLt. Hull's name would remain when the April 15 listing was recorded.

* * *

The official statement of the Aircraft Accident Officer gave a terse description of the mishap that Crew #10 experienced on March 18, 1943 (see page 7):

B-17F 42-3068 departed Redmond AAF at 1315 on March 18, 1943 for a local flight. At 1700 the Pilot, 2nd Lt., Charles T. Hull struck a line of wires in the vicinity of Adrian, Oregon. Following the collision, the plane damaged but flyable, the pilot flew to and landed at Walla Walla Army Air Field.

It is the opinion of the Aircraft Accident Officer that the responsibility of the accident rests wholly on the pilot who was flying deliberately low against repeated squadron and group orders.

It is the undersigned's recommendation that this accident and the disciplinary action taken by the Commanding Officer of the 88th Bombardment Group be used as an example to impress pilots with the consequences of needless "buzzing".

The official "Report of Aircraft Accident," (see page 12) dated March 29, also included statements from the pilot and each of the nine crew members, as well as two completed "Flight Report" forms, one for "Operations" (the crew, their duties, flight time and actual itinerary) and one for "Engineering" (preflight inspection of the aircraft and loading of munitions, fuel and oil status, time records for engines and aircraft, and a brief assessment of damage by the pilot). There were photographs of the damage and additional supporting statements, and then there was the Group Commander's (now-LtCol. Hewitt Wheless) comment, concurring with the Accident Officer's assessment. From the crew, one of the more detailed statements came from 2ndLt. Henry, the navigator:

I was flying in plane No. 42-3068, B-17F, in the capacity of navigator. We took off at about 1400 and flew in formation, dropping bombs. We broke up the formation about 1600 and flew individually; our pilot, to the best of my knowledge, flying instruments. We were flying at about 11,000 feet.

At about 1700 the pilot asked me for our position, then requested that I come back and show him our position on the sectional chart, which I did. A few minutes later we were flying at about 50 to 100 feet above terrain . . . about ten miles south of Adrian, Oregon, and approximately

one mile east of the Snake River. We suddenly saw one or more wires in the path of the plane. Lt. HULL pulled up, but the propellers did not clear the wire. There were several sparks, and one wire hit the pilot's windshield, shattering it. I saw only one wire, about three-eighth inch [sic] in diameter. There were no telephone poles visible.

After the accident we immediately climbed in order to gain altitude. Then, after contacting the ground station at Redmond, we returned to Walla Walla where we landed.

WAR DEPARTMENT
A. A. F. Form No. 14
(Revised May 16, 1942)

WALLA WALLA A. A. F.
WAR DEPARTMENT
U. S. ARMY AIR FORCES

RESTRICTED

REPORT OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

ACCIDENT No. 068
J.W.W.
43-518-K2
4

(1) Place Vicinity Adian, Oregon (2) Date March 18, 1943 (3) Time 1700

AIRCRAFT: (4) Type and model B-17F (5) A. F. No. 42-3068 (6) Station Walla Walla AAF

Organization: (7) 2nd Bomb Command (Command and Air Force) (8) 88th Bomb Grp (Group) (9) 318th Bomb Sq (Squadron)

PERSONNEL

DUTY (10)	NAME (Last name first) (11)	RATING (12)	SERIAL NO. (13)	RANK (14)	PERSONNEL CLASS (15)	BRANCH (16)	AIR FORCE OR COMMAND (17)	RESULT TO PERSONNEL (18)	USE OF PARACHUTE (19)
01P	HULL, CHARLES T.	P	0-793777	2nd Lt.	201 01	AC	2nd AF	None	
04CP	CARTER, JOSEPH E.	P	T-120974	F/O	201 9V	AC	2nd AF	None	
05N	HENRY, ROBERT M.	N	0-796558	2nd Lt.	201 01	AC	2nd AF	None	
06B	COMBS, ALBERT	B	0-2043755	2nd Lt.	201 01	AC	2nd AF	None	
07E	MULLER, MELVIN C.	E	33179793	S/Sgt.	1E1 00	AC	2nd AF	None	
08E	ELIUS, CRAIG B.	E	18080480	S/Sgt.	1E1 38	AC	2nd AF	None	
09R	URBAN, MICHAEL A.	R	31167454	S/Sgt.	1E1 00	AC	2nd AF	None	
10AR	KRIBLER, ANTON J.	AR	37369679	Sgt.	1E1 00	AC	2nd AF	None	
11AG	MARZYAK, EMIL	AG	36366030	Sgt.	1E1 00	AC	2nd AF	None	
12AG	SHEDDING, ROBERT E.	AG	32360625	S/Sgt.	1E1 00	AC	2nd AF	None	

PILOT CHARGED WITH ACCIDENT

(20) HULL CHARLES T. (21) 0-793777 (22) 2nd Lt. (23) 201 (24) AC

(Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Serial number) (Rank) (Personnel class) (Branch)

Assigned (25) 2nd Bomb Command (Command and Air Force) (26) Provisional Grp (Group) (28) Walla Walla AAF (Station)

Attached for flying (29) 2nd Bomb Command (Command and Air Force) (30) 88th Bomb Grp (Group) (31) 318th Bomb Sq (Squadron) (32) Walla Walla AAF (Station)

Original rating (33) 2nd Lt. (34) 11-10-42 (Date) Present rating (35) 2nd Lt. (36) 11-10-42 (Date) Instrument rating (37) (Date)

The official "Report of Aircraft Accident," regarding the "collision with objects while in full flight" that 2ndLt. Charles Hull and Crew #10 had experienced on March 18 was completed on March 29 with the concurrence and signature of the new commanding officer for the 88th Bomb Group, LtCol. Wheless.

The bombardier, 2ndLt. Combs, had asked for and received permission to trade seats with the copilot, once the formation had broken up. His statement added:

We headed East from Redmond, and after flying for about 40 minutes, we came to a valley where the pilot let down to about 50 feet of [sic] the ground. We were at this altitude when we flew over a field located about 10 miles South of Adian [sic], Oregon. It was there that we struck what was apparently a telephone or power line. I did not see it as we were in a slight bank and I was looking up the wing.

Since F/O Carter and Sgts. Redding, Kohler, Mateyak, and Urban would continue together as a crew and would ultimately fly "Miss Fortune" into combat with Owen Burgess and Harry Gorden, their short statements on the accident are included as well. F/O Carter had given up his seat as copilot on the flight deck and had taken Lt. Combs' place in the nose of the aircraft. He added:

We flew this way for about thirty (30) minutes before we started the low flying. We had only been down low but a short time when we hit the wires. We regained our altitude and started for Redmond.

S/Sgt. Redding described the accident in his statement, two days later:

I was in the Tail position of the Air-plane. I know that we were Buzzing a small town located in a valley. I was not aware of the fact that we hit anything until [sic] informed of the fact by the Radio Operator. The only thing I felt was a slight jar of the ship. I couldn't see any damage from my position.

Sgt. Anton Kohler and Sgt. Emil Mateyak gave their versions of the accident:

[Kohler]: I was in the waist section of the plane. We had just buzzed a small town at about 100 ft altitude. We then headed south and hit a telephone line about two miles South of town. The rest of the crew said the name of the town was Adrain [sic], Idaho [Oregon]. We were at about 60 ft altitude when we hit the wires.

RESTRICTED	EXHIBIT J
THE THREE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON EIGHTY EIGHTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) Office of the Operations Officer	
AAF, Walla Walla, Wn. March 20, 1943	
SUBJECT: Statement	
TO : To whom it may concern	
1. I left the waist gun position just before we started to buzz. During the time of accident I sat by the heater in the radio room. I didn't even know that we had hit anything until the Radio Operator informed me that we had hit the cable and telephone wires. Later the Pilot came and told us all the details, but when we landed we found out there was more damage than we thought.	
<i>Emil Mateyak</i> Sgt Emil Mateyak 36366030 Crew #10	

[Mateyak]: I left the waist gun position just before we started to buzz. During the time of accident I sat by the heater in the radio room. I didn't even know that we had hit anything until [sic] the Radio Operator informed me that we had hit the cable and telephone wires. Later the Pilot came and told us all the details, but when we landed we found out there was more damage than [sic] we thought.

S/Sgt. Michael Urban was the radio operator, and his account follows:

We circled the town of Adrain [sic], Idaho [Oregon]. We lost altitude south of the said town and began buzzing. From my position it was difficult to see anything approaching but after the wires were snapped I did hear a momentary click in the phones as a result of hitting the wires. That was all I knew of hitting anything. We immediately began gaining altitude and arrived in Walla Walla at 18:00.

In his own account, 2ndLt. Hull stated that takeoff had been at 1315 hours, and that the crew had flown formation bombing until about 1550 hours. His statement continues:

After 1550 I flew generally East, above cumulus clouds at altitudes above 10,000 ft. 1700 [hours] found us over a valley later identified as in the vicinity of Adrian Oregon. In this valley at a low altitude, not near any dwelling [or] home we hit some wires type unknown. . . . All engines preformed [sic] normally on return flight and there was no vibration from props or engines. The aircraft sustained considerable surface damage Crew was uninjured.

The official accident report listed damage to:

Pitot tube, loop receiver, pilots windshield [see photo, right], #1, #2 and #3 props., #2 engine. Holes in fuselage and #1 and #2 cowling.

The words, "100% Negligence," added in cursive, appear under "Cause of accident" on the report, which made it clear that the pilot was charged with the accident.

* * *



The March 15 roster cited above for the 88th Bomb Group includes only officers. The four sergeants—Redding, Kohler, Mateyak, and Urban—were with the 318th Bomb Squadron at that time, but S/Sgt. Redding would move to Geiger Field, effective April 12. The next installment will show that Sgts. Kohler and Mateyak would join him there, possibly at the same time. Three days after Group Commander Wheless had signed the accident report, an April 1 roster was recorded. The four officers from Crew #10, including 2ndLt. Hull, are listed with "Air Corps Unassigned, (Baker), attached to 88th Bomb Gp (H)," i.e., with the Provisional Group commanded by Major Nolan Baker. But 2ndLts. Combs and Henry, the bombardier and navigator, and F/O Carter, the copilot, are now with the 317th Bomb Squadron. 2ndLt. Hull is with the 318th Squadron. Subsequent rosters indicate that Combs, Henry, and Carter had left the 88th Bomb Group by April 15, but 2ndLt. Hull remained until at least May 15, when he was listed with the Provisional Group of Col. Allen Reed.

We do not know the specifics of the disciplinary action taken "to be used as an example" with Lt. Hull, but it is clear that his career path was different from those of the other officers from Crew #10, over the

two months following the accident. From the "B-17 Fortress Master Log," compiled by Dave Osborne, the B-17F damaged in the accident had been in the AAF inventory for less than two months, and it had been assigned to the 88th Bomb Group at Walla Walla only ten days before the mishap. The only further notation for B-17F, 42-3068, is that the aircraft was scrapped for salvage value (reclamation complete) in October, 1945.

* * *

The story of 2ndLt. Charles Hull, the pilot who flew in training with Emil Mateyak, Anton Kohler, and Robert Redding—seventy-seven years ago this month, and less than seven months before those three lives would be snuffed out—seemed to evaporate, as if to vanish into thin air. It doesn't usually work this way, but in an instant the story of Charles Hull took on new life:

Decorated WWII bomber pilot honored, remembered by family, friends

So read the headline for the story published just three months ago—on December 5, 2019—by the Public Affairs staff, Columbus (MS) Air Force Base. The article continued:

WINONA, Miss. -- Families, friends and loved ones gathered together Dec. 4 to remember former Army Air Corps Capt. Charles T. Hull, a decorated World War II bomber pilot who survived 25 missions in the European Theater, during a funeral and burial service with full military honors in Winona, Mississippi. . . .

Mr. Hull had passed away on November 29, at the age of ninety-eight, in Madison, Mississippi.

Hull began his service in the Army Air Corps in November 1942, where he attended the Columbus Army Flying School on what is now Columbus Air Force Base. Once training was completed, Hull was stationed in Polebrook, England, where he piloted the B-17 Flying Fortress for the 351st Bomber Group of the Eighth Air Force.



Hull flew a total of 25 missions from June to December of 1943, during which time he flew missions over Germany without the protection of fighter escorts for him and his crew. . . .

He had flown his first combat mission on July 14, 1943, over a month before the crew of "Miss Fortune" would fly into harm's way. On October 8, 1943, the target for his mission would be the submarine slip and dock area at Bremen, Germany. His former training crew members from Walla Walla—S/Sgt. Emil Mateyak, S/Sgt. Anton Kohler, and S/Sgt. Robert Redding—would perish that same afternoon in the skies over Bremen.

"He was brave to say the least," said Sandra Inman, one of Hull's nieces. "He wouldn't have gone on those 25 missions if he wasn't brave. He said the Germans fighters were coming at his plane like a swarm of bees. Every raid he went out. They had no escorts so he was just steadily dodging bullets."

For his outstanding service in Europe he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Service Medal upon returning from his tour in Europe. Hull further served his country as a flight instructor for the new B-29 Superfortress. . . .

"He was proud, but he had memories of the war that, you could say today, were 'post-traumatic stress' because it was so tough and he was risking his life and those of his men," Inman said. "They had no escort. It was very dangerous, what he did, but he was really proud."

Godspeed Emil Mateyak, Anton Kohler, and Robert Redding, and Godspeed, Mr. Hull . . .



Funeral services were held in Winona, Mississippi, on December 4, 2019, for former AAF Captain Charles T. Hull. *Left*, his Bible and his B-17 combat crew photo. *Center*, a family member speaks, over his flag-draped casket. *Right*, the missing man formation at the conclusion of former Capt. Hull's service.