Darwin L. Ritchey

Enlisted 9-13-43 as Pvt.

Corporal, U.S. Army Air Forces (AAF)

Service # 37577188

758th Bomber Squadron, 459th Bomber Group, Heavy

Entered the Service from: Minnesota

Born: 1925, Died: 22-Aug-44

Missing in Action or Buried at Sea

Awards: Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart

459th Bombardment Group Heavy

B-24 Liberators of World War II
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>General Order</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Ribbon &amp; Device</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darwin Ritchey</td>
<td>Cpl</td>
<td>GO #2541</td>
<td>08/10/1944</td>
<td>AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin Ritchey</td>
<td>Cpl</td>
<td>GO #3511</td>
<td>09/20/1944</td>
<td>AM/OLC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AM= Air Medal  
OLC = Oak Leaf Cluster (For Second AM)
**Air Medal** Criteria: The Air Medal is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity in or with the armed forces of the United States, shall have distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. Awards may be made to recognize single acts of merit or heroism or for meritorious service. Examples of personnel whose combat duties require them to fly include those in the attack elements of units involved in air-land assaults against an armed enemy and those directly involved in airborne command and control of combat operations.

**Purple Heart** Metal Criteria: Awarded as an entitlement entitled upon being killed or wounded in a manner meeting the specific criteria of AR 600-8-22: (1) In any action against an enemy of the U.S.; (2) In any action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the U.S. are or have been engaged.
459th Bomb Group; Giulia Airfield, Italien

756th Bomb Squadron 757th Bomb Squadron
758th Bomb Squadron 759th Bomb Squadron

Tail Design of the 758th

15th Air Force & 459th Bomb Group - 758th Bomb Squadron Patch

---

**Plane Info**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Plane</th>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>MACR #</th>
<th>Model #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>440822</td>
<td>B-24</td>
<td>44-40326</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>15457</td>
<td>J-155-CO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MACR = Missing Air Crew Report
459th Bombardment Group (H)

Constituted as 459th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 19 May 1943. Activated on 1 Jul 1943. Trained for combat with B-24's. Moved to Italy, Jan-Feb 1944, and assigned to Fifteenth AF. Engaged primarily in strategic bombardment, Mar 1944-Apr 1945, attacking such targets as oil refineries, munitions and aircraft factories, industrial areas, airfields, and communications centers in Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

Received a DUC for leading the 304th Wing through enemy interceptors and intense flak to raid an airfield and aircraft assembly plant at Bad Voslau on 23 Apr 1944. During combat the group also flew some support and interdictory missions. Struck railroads in Mar 1944 to cut enemy supply lines leading to the Anzio beachhead. Participated in the pre-invasion bombing of southern France in Aug 1944. Hit railroad bridges, depots, and marshalling yards during Apr 1945 to assist Allied forces in northern Italy. Returned to the US in Aug. Inactivated on 18 Aug 1945.

What Happened that week:

FRIDAY, 18 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):
370 fighter-escorted B-17s and B-24s bomb 5 oil refineries around Ploesti, Rumania; 89 B-24s, with fighter cover, bomb Alibunar Airfield, Yugoslavia. The detachment of the 94th Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group, operating from Aghione, Corsica with P-38s returns to base at Salsola Airfield, Italy.

SATURDAY, 19 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):
Bombing the Ploesti, Rumania area for the fourth consecutive day, 65 B-17s supported by 125 P-51s blast 2 oil refineries.

SUNDAY, 20 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):
460+ B-24s and B-17s, some fighter-escorted, bomb the airfield and marshalling yard at Szolnok, Hungary and oil refineries at Dubova, Czechoslovakia, and Czechowice and Auschwitz, Poland.

MONDAY, 21 AUGUST 1944

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force):
117 B-24s, escorted by P-51s, bomb Nish Airfield, Yugoslavia. 102 B-24s, with P-51 escort, hit Hajduboszormeny Airfield, Hungary which 46 other P-51s sweep, some making low-level strafings on parked aircraft. In Italy, the detachments of the 27th and 71st Fighter Squadrons, 1st Fighter Group, operating from Aghione, Corsica with P-38s, return to base at Salsola Airfield; and the detachment of the 37th Fighter Squadron, 14th Fighter Group, operating from Corsica with P-38s, returns to base at Triolo Airfield.

TUESDAY, 22 AUGUST 1944

MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO)

STRATEGIC OPERATIONS (Fifteenth Air Force): Around 530 B-17s and B-24s supported by P-51s and P-38s bomb hit targets in Austria and Germany; B-17s bomb oil refineries at Odertal, Germany; B-24s bomb oil refineries at Korneuburg, Austria and Blechhammer, Germany, and oil storage at Lobau, Austria.
Darwin’s ship was shot down on Mission # 95 to bomb the synthetic oil refineries at Blechhammer, Germany, August 22, 1944 - a long difficult eight and a half hour trip if you made it. The 459th Bomb Group lost 5 planes that day, 50 airmen MIA that day on a terrible mission - 2 each from the 758th Bomb Squadron and the 759th Bomb Squadron and one from the 757th Bomb Squadron. All of us who flew missions to Blechhammer, Germany remember those missions as being one of the roughest ever because of flak, fighters, weather and sweating out low fuel status because of the distance and resistance encountered.
(Fifteenth Air Force): Around 530 B-17s and B-24s supported by P-51s and P-38s bomb hit targets in Austria and Germany; B-17s bomb oil refineries at Odertal, Germany; B-24s bomb oil refineries at Korneuburg, Austria and Blechhammer, Germany, and oil storage at Lobau, Austria.

SN 44-40326 458th Bombardment Group Heavy Crew:

Sidney L Ruff – 0705144 - Pilot - LWA (Lightly wounded), RTD (Returned to Duty 9-2-44) 1st Lt 758 Squadron

Robert W Mills - 0767608 - Co-pilot – LWA (Lightly wounded), RTD 9-1-44 2nd Lt 758 Squadron

Harold Rau Jr. – 0716945 - Bombardier – RTD 2nd Lt 758 Squadron

Melvin Mendelson - 12086358 - Engineer Gunner (Top Turret?)- KIA S/Sgt 758 Squadron
Tablets of the Missing at Florence American Cemetery Florence, Italy

Darwin L Ritchey - 37577188 – Left Waste Gunner - KIA Cpl. 758 Squadron
Tablets of the Missing at Florence American Cemetery Florence, Italy

Earl A. Chamberlain - 12167958 - Tail Gunner – POW - Repatriated Sgt. 758 Squadron

Albert Murillo – 39294002 – nose? Gunner - KIA Cpl 758th Squadron
Tablets of the Missing at Florence American Cemetery Florence, Italy


Glen L. Allen - 37240141 – ARM Gunner (Ball Turret?) - KIA S SG 758 Squadron
Sicily-Rome American Cemetery Nettuno, Italy
Delaine (Sister), Leo, Lillie (Parents) and Darwin

Roger Hanson (my Uncle) and Darwin (My Great Uncle)
More Pictures

Darlene Ritchey, Darwin and Donna Nickerson (Hanson) My Mother
Who am I? (and why)

I am the Son of Mike and Donna (Hanson) Nickerson
Donna is the daughter of Harold and Doris (Ritchey) Hanson
Doris was the Sister of Darwin.

I have always been interested in airplanes and not very interested in genealogy. Then one day while talking with my Mother, she said to me “If I die some day, I just want someone to know what the heck I am doing with and old slingshot”. That slingshot was Darwin’s and was given to her by what I knew a “Grandma Ritchey”.

My memories of Grandma were visiting her in a white house in Fergus Falls and playing with some little plastic monkeys or something like a plastic barrel in a smaller barrel until you got to a small monkey inside. I remember her as a very nice lady and knew my Mother loved her very much.

The slingshot made me ask what his name was again and being somewhat of a computer freak, I starting searching the world wide web. In a few hours I found his middle initial, a few hours later, his Army serial number. Days later, I found the Squadron and possible crew members. Then learned of a MACR (missing air crewman’s report). I ordered it thru paypal and had it emailed to me in three days. Ok, now I totally hooked and I remembered my days with a metal detector beeping away on some hard ground when the detector found something, I was excited to dig it up. To find more about Darwin, all that was needed now was to dig. Sometimes you get a pop cap and other times a silver mercury dime.

Once I received the MACR, It listed the fellow crewman of Darwin’s. At this point is seems like he is coming to life. I fall asleep thinking of where next I could search next, the men’s home towns perhaps or their families own research.

Today I found that the Radio operator that survived the crash had recorded some transcripts of his experiences and someone had entered them into the Library of Congress (see nest page), which I immediately email and expect a copy of that interview in a few days.

I have learned so much in the past month. The 18,000 B-24’s built, 2 left flying today, The Ford plant that was turned into a mile long assembly plant cranking out about one B-24 an hour.

In the end, I am completely baffled how many souls were lost, Awestruck on the airplane losses PER DAY and completely humbled by what those brave folks must have gone thru. We throw the term hero out these days much too freely. Those men and women (I learned more about WASP too) really saved our country. Think about it, if not for people like Darwin, would we be where we are today?

All I can say is thank you Darwin, May God bless your soul by our remembrance of him.

Russ
August 25, 2009

**WOW!!! Thrill of my life!!** Today I received the envelope from the Library of congress called the Veterans History Project. I had requested it after I found some reference on the Internet that the radio operator on Darwin’s ship had given an interview for the history project (Interview is in the back of this project. The interview was from Mr. August (Gus) Dietrich. Gus was the right waste gunner on the plane Darwin was in. In the interview, it stated Gus was living in Greenville NC in 2004. Well, I went to 411.com, entered his name and bang, a number showed up of August Dietrich Jr. With the excitement of a schoolboy, I dialed the number and a lady answered. I asked her if August Jr. was there as there was a Jr. listed (assuming it was Gus’ son) The Lady asked me what I wanted and I told her about my research of Darwin and WWII. She then told me that August was not junior but August himself and asked if I would like to talk with him. My heart DROPEd! A few moments Mr. Dietrich answered the phone. He said that most crews had a picture of them in front of the plane but they did not. He said he would look to see if he had any pictures and would send me some if he could find them. I asked him if he remembered Darwin and referred to him as “ritchey”. He said they loved to play cribbage together and referred to him as his “cribage buddy” On that August 22 day, he told me that he was the right waste gunner across from Darwin and when they were shot at by a couple of German ME109’s, a round hit Darwin and about took his leg off. When they crashed, he had a hold of Darwin but due to his injuries and no life jackets, couldn’t hold on to him. I can’t imagine that! August told me his health wasn’t the best (at 86). Tomorrow I am going to send him a thank you letter for his phone call and for being a friend of Darwin. UNBELIVABLE!!!
Dear Mr. & Mrs. Dietrich:

I want to thank you again for allowing me to interrupt your evening. I hope I was not intruding in your privacy. If Darwin never had a chance to say it, I want to by saying “thank you for being his friend” and I sincerely thank you for your service to our country.

I would also like you to know that by meeting you and the bits of information you have to share, greatly makes Darwin’s memory more strong and real for our family. My mother (little girl in picture) was so happy I was doing this research for this summer’s family reunion that she was almost in tears. She only has a few memories of Darwin and had wondered all these years what really happened to him.

Please accept this small gift (Minnesota wild rice) of appreciation.

My Great Grandmother had only two sons, both were MIA for a while. Darwin’s brother Myron ended up a POW, in the Bataan death march, returned to the U.S. and passed only a few years ago.

Did you have a name on the B-24 that went down?

Hope you are feeling better and God Bless.

Russ Nickerson
44512 Cty Rd 36
Laporte, MN 56461

218-224-3368
Miscellaneous Notes and Information

12167958  CHAMBERLAIN EARL A - ROCHESTER NEW YORK
Private             Air Corps Rochester, MONROE NY 1942
Enlisted 9-30-1942  (Born 1921)

GRADE CODE  Colonel or Superintendent of Nurses or Contract Surgeon or First Sergeant or Captain or Chief Petty Officer Acting Appointment

DATE REPORT: DAY (DD) 8-22-44 / Heavy Bomber / 459th

AREA  European Theatre: Hungary

LATEST REPORT DATE: DAY (DD) 6-7-45 Individual has been reported through sources considered official

STATUS  Returned to Military Control, Liberated or Repatriated

DETAINING POWER  GERMANY

CAMP  Stalag 13D Nuremberg (Oflag 73) Bavaria 49-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: CHAMBERLAIN EARL A</th>
<th>Address: 127 GREEN KNOLLS DR APT B, ROCHESTER, NY, 14620</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OUF Code: 36725350/30303226</td>
<td>Reported By: RANK GROUP PLC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unclaimed funds http://wwe1.osc.state.ny.us
‘High Flight’ By John Gillespie Magee, Jr

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth, And danced the skies on laughter silvered wings; Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth Of sun-split clouds and done a hundred things You have not dreamed of -- Wheeled and soared and swung High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there I've chased the shouting wind along and flung My eager craft through footless halls of air. Up, up the long delirious, burning blue I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace, Where never lark, or even eagle flew; And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod The high untrespassed sanctity of space, Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

Darlene Ritchey (Darwin’s Sister)
National Archives & Records Administration
War Department Files

CPL Darwin L. Ritchey

ID: 37577188
Branch of Service: U.S. Army
Hometown: Otter Tail County, MN
Status: KIA
Darwin L. Ritchey

ID: 37577188
Entered the Service From: Minnesota
Rank: Corporal

Service: U.S. Army Air Forces, 758th Bomber Squadron, 459th Bomber Group, Heavy

Died: Tuesday, August 22, 1944
Memorialized at: Florence American Cemetery
Location: Via Cassia, Italy

Awards: Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart
From Reid via email on 8-24-09:

Hi Russ, Attached is the 8-22-44 Ditching Report for Lt Ruff’s crew, Section 4 from Coffee Tower Book P 104. The scan of Section 4 did not come out well so see Scan # 4 (which has the bottom 2 sentences cut off but maybe you can read this together to make it out). This adds a little to the MACR report of what happened on the mission & ditching. This all helps to tell what happened. S/Sgt Mendelson—Engineer was killed in the ditching and 2 injured gunners drown before the 4 survivors were rescued. Let me know when you get Dietrich’s report.

4. On August 22, 1944, Lieutenant Sidney Ruff of the 758th Squadron was returning from a mission to Blechhammer, Germany. His aircraft had been damaged by flak over the target and by a subsequent Me-109 attack. The airplane was badly shot up; several control cables were damaged and fuel spewed out of the wing into the bomb bay. One gunner had been killed and another badly injured by cannon fire from the fighter; a third gunner had bailed out during the fighter attack.

Ruff attempted to reach the island of Vis off the Yugoslav coast, but ran out of fuel about 15 miles short of there over the Adriatic Sea. He was barely able to control the plane and “crashed into the water nose first.” The flight engineer was killed when he was struck by the top turret which was torn loose from its mount. The radio operator, Gus Dietrich — slightly injured during the fighter attack — escaped from the plane, but was unable to inflate the life rafts because they were perforated by flak and/or cannon fire. He got the badly injured gunner out of the plane, but could not keep him afloat — the injured man’s life vest was gone. Another member of the crew was seriously injured in the crash and drowned. Dietrich, Ruff, the copilot, and the bombardier finally pulled themselves onto the wing of the floating aircraft and sat there about an hour until an Air-Sea Rescue launch picked them up.

When Ruff’s Liberator hit the water, seven living crew men were aboard — one of the original nine had bailed out and another had been killed during the earlier fighter attack. One of the seven was killed upon ditching. Two others drowned after exiting the plane (one of these had been badly injured in the earlier fighter attack; the second was badly injured during the ditching). Four crew members survived.
September 3, 2009

Thank you for indulging me in all of this stuff and hope you find it as interesting as I did. Thru this project I have met one of the guys on the plane with Darwin and Mr. Reid M Waltman (1st Lt Navigator 758 Squadron) who thru his help I have learned much. Mr. Waltman was also so kind as to also add most of this information on his website in memory of Darwin:

http://www.459bg.org

Darwin’s info is at http://www.459bg.org/Ritchey_Darwin_L.cfm

Last email from Mr. Waltman:

Reid writes:

Hi Russ, General Orders (GOs) were issued by the 15th A F for Awards and Honors to the Servicemen servicing in the MTO, Mediterranean Theater of Operation ,and came to the 15th AF from the various Bomb Group, Fighter Group and Recon Group Headquarters as recommendations. The 15th A F Headquarters then approved and issued the GOs. I have a paper copy of G Os # 2541 and 3511, which includes a group of individuals receiving the named awards. If you want a copy, please advise and I will look these up and send them to you as Lynn Keener got these last summer at Maxwell AFB.

The Air Medal was awarded for the first five missions flown and for every succeeding five ( 5,10,15,...), until later in WWII where they were given at #5 then for every 10 ( 5, 15, 25,...).

Air Medals were also given to gunners for unassisted shooting down of a German Fighter. We had a 301st tail gunner that had AM/13OLC. Three of those were awarded for fighters. (Daniel Boone of the 15th AF)

Lynn
214th Combat Crew Training School
Peterson Field
Colorado Springs, Colorado

This is to Certify, That

SPL. DARWIN L. BITCHEY 37877188

has satisfactorily completed the course
of training for combat crews
as prescribed by Headquarters, Second Air Force
and given at

Peterson Field, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Given on this 12 day of JUNE in the
year of Our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and forty-four.

Attend:

John T. Tipton
Major, Air Corps
Director of Training

W. D. Tipton
Colonel, Air Corps
Commanding
CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY

ARMY AIR FORCES FLEXIBLE GUNNERY SCHOOL
HARLINGEN ARMY AIR FIELD
Harlingen, Texas

Date: FEB 26 1944

This is to certify that

RITCHIE, DARWIN La.
Surname Christian Middle

37577188 Serial No.

PFC. Rank

UNITED STATES ARMY

has satisfactorily completed the course of instruction prescribed for

AERIAL GUNNERS

Subjects and grades are shown on reverse side.

By order of Colonel MORGAN

FREDERICK T. NEFF
1st Lieutenant A. C.
Secretary
CITATION OF HONOR

UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES

Corporal Darwin L. Ritchey

WHO GAVE HIS LIFE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS DUTY

August 22, 1944

HE LIVED TO BEAR HIS COUNTRY'S ARMS. HE DIED TO SAVE ITS HONOR. HE WAS A SOLDIER... AND HE KNEW A SOLDIER'S DUTY. HIS SACRIFICE WILL HELP TO KEEP AGLOW THE FLAMING TORCH THAT LIGHTS OUR LIVES... THAT MILLIONS YET UNBORN MAY KNOW THE PRICELESS JOY OF LIBERTY. AND WE WHO PAY HIM HOMAGE, AND REVERE HIS MEMORY, IN SOLEMN PRIDE REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO A COMPLETE FULFILLMENT OF THE TASK FOR WHICH HE SO GALLANTLY HAS PLACED HIS LIFE UPON THE ALTAR OF MAN'S FREEDOM.

H. H. ARNOLD
General, U. S. Army,
Commanding General Army Air Forces
IN REPLY REFER TO
AG 201 Ritchey, Darwin L.
PC-N MAT 207

WAR DEPARTMENT
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

5 September 1944

Mrs. Lillie Ritchey
1112 South Mill Street
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Dear Mrs. Ritchey:

This letter is to confirm my recent telegram in which you were regretfully informed that your son, Corporal Darwin L. Ritchey, 37,577,168, Air Corps, has been reported missing in action over Yugoslavia since 22 August 1944.

I know that added distress is caused by failure to receive more information or details. Therefore, I wish to assure you that at any time additional information is received it will be transmitted to you without delay, and, if in the meantime no additional information is received, I will again communicate with you at the expiration of three months. Also it is the policy of the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces upon receipt of the "Missing Air Crew Report" to convey to you any details that might be contained in that report.

The term "missing in action" is used only to indicate that the whereabouts or status of an individual is not immediately known. It is not intended to convey the impression that the case is closed. I wish to emphasize that every effort is exerted continuously to clear up the status of our personnel. Under war conditions this is a difficult task as you must readily realize. Experience has shown that many persons reported missing in action are subsequently reported as prisoners of war, but as this information is furnished by countries with which we are at war, the War Department is helpless to expedite such reports. However, in order to relieve financial worry, Congress has enacted legislation which continues in force the pay, allowances and allotments to dependents of personnel being carried in a missing status.

Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy during this period of uncertainty.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

J. F. JULLIO
Major General,
The Adjutant General.
Mrs. Lillie Ritchey
1112 South Mill Street
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

My dear Mrs. Ritchey:

I deeply regret that I must confirm the notice which you have received from the War Department informing you that your son, Corporal Darwin L. Ritchey, 39577188, was killed in action on 22 August 1944. I realize that there is little I can say to lighten the burden of grief which is yours at this time but I feel that the following details, which represent the extent of our knowledge of the circumstances surrounding Darwin's death, will be of interest to you.

The heavy bombardment plane on which your son served as an aerial gunner was forced to make a crash landing in the Adriatic Sea near the coast of Yugoslavia. Notwithstanding the best efforts of rescue craft to reach the scene of the crash in time, Darwin did not survive. His personal effects have been sent to the Effects Quartermaster at Kansas City, Missouri, and from that point they will be forwarded to you.

You may well be proud of the contribution which Darwin has made to the cause in which he believed. Prior to his death, he had participated in twenty-three combat missions and for the valorous execution of his assignments during these operations, he has been awarded the Air Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster. On behalf of your son's many friends in this command, I extend this heartfelt expression of sympathy.

Very sincerely yours,

N. F. TWINING
Major General, USA
Commanding
Darwin’s Log Book

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furlough</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Assembly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. T. U.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staging</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. O. E.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopovers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**ARMY LIFE**

By [Name]

3757188


July - 1944

USAAF

October - 1943 - 19

Restricted

Confidential - Secret

---

**INDUCTION**

Received notice to report for local physical August 17, 1943. Applied for voluntary induction and went to Fort Snelling September 1 for physical. Not back home Sept 15 and had to report back on October 15, (Swore in on Sept. 13, 1943) Went home October 16-17. Left for Amarillo, Texas October 20.
- BASIC -
Arrived in Amarillo October 22. Left basic training for gunnery school. December 27, 1943.

- GUNNERY -
Arrived at Harlingen Aerial Gunnery School December 29.
6 weeks course.
3 weeks of machine gun and turret school.
2 weeks at air gunnery range. (first flight).

- O.T.U. -

- FURLough -
Best days of Army life. I had 13 days at home — had to be in Salt Lake on March 13, 1944.
- STAGING -
Arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska June 18. Did not do much here – just waited for overseas shipping orders. Left for P.O.E. June 29, 1944.

- P.O.E. -
Arrived at Brainerd Field – Manchester, New Hampshire on June 29. We flew from Lincoln also.

- STOP-OVERS

- MISSIONS -

1-2. Flew ship 877. Dropped frog-bombs on a German airfield near Munich, Germany. – No fighters and moderate flak. (July 16th)


4. July 20. Ship 183 (Ten hits and 4 misses). Started out to bomb...
an engine factory in Friedrichshain, Germany. We flew two super charges and had to turn back.

[5-6] July 21 Ship 168 (Barrel Lass) Bombed a hydrogen plant in Bruz, St. (Synthetic oil plant) Intense but inaccurate flak - no fighters (3 flak holes)


-11-

airdrome near Toulon, France - Met first enemy fighters - accurate flak - 15 flake holes in our ship and bomb bay door was knocked loose when a couple of our bombs went through! (No escort)

[8-9] July 25 - Ship 350 Bombed the Herman Steers Tank Works at Linz, Austria. Fighter and moderate flak - we had 7 flak holes. Escort took care of the

-12-

enemy fighters

10 July 27 Ship 214 (Hot Shorzie) Bombed an armament plant at Budapest, Hungary. Heavy but inaccurate flak - fighters tangled again with our escort. Ferries lost plenty of fighters that day (5 flak holes)

11 July 28 Ship 317 Bombed an oil refinery in Ploesti, Romania (Standard Oil) No fighters hit

-13-

very heavy, intense and accurate flak. We got by with 23 flak holes. I quite near me - I have it as a souvenir

SPECIAL NOTE

July 30, 1944

A little excitement tonight. A German crash landed in a field very near here. 6 men captured.
13 August 3, 1944
Ship 954
Bombed aircraft plant at Friedrichshafen, Ger. Saw fighters but they didn't attack. Moderate and inaccurate flak - no holes. Had to land at another field - broken gasoline.

14 August 6
Ship 262 (Betty Anne)
Bombed a bridge near Lyons, France. No flak, no fighters. (Ideal mission)

15-16 August 7
Ship 160 (Cheery)
Bombed oil refinery near Bleanhammer, Ger. No fighters but intense flak (4 holes). Sweated out the gas on return.

17 August 13
Ship 356 (Betty Me, Mac)
Bombed bridge (E.F.) in France. No flak, no fighters.

18 August 14
Ship 356 (Betty Me, Mac)

Bombing gun emplacements in northern Italy. No fighters - flak, but hung off to one side - no holes.

19 August 15
Ship 356 (Betty Me, Mac)
Didn't drop bombs because of clouds over target. Purpose of mission was to support invasion of Southern France. Very little and inaccurate flak. Fighters were claimed to have been seen but taken care of by our escort.

20 August 17
Ship 326 (Hoovershot Me)
Bombed oil refinery at Ploesti, Romania. No fighters but heavy, intense and accurate flak (4 holes).

21 August 18
Ship 356 (Betty Me, Mac)
Bombed oil refinery near Ploesti, Romania. No fighters - moderate
and inaccurate flak. No flak holes.

22 August 20
Ship 344 (The Moron)
Bombed oil refinery in Czechoslovakia. No fighters, scant and inaccurate flak (no holes).

23 August 21
Ship 262 (Betty Anne)
Bombed air-drome in Hungary. Slight and inaccurate flak (no holes). Encountered enemy fighter - one made attack on our plane but was vectors off.

KIA the next Day Aug 22, 1944

UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS

August 1 - Went to Flagia to a concert. Lilly Pons in person. Also Andre Tatalyne

Countries flown over
Germany, Sicily, Yugoslavia, Sardina, France, Italy, Romania, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Albania, Bulgaria
Invasion of So. France
We were to give the ground forces air support. Most every kind of plane available was on it. B-24, B-25, B-26, B-17, P-38, P-47, Wildcats and Hellcats, from navy carriers. Also a few British planes were there. Saw big guns of battleships blasting enemy shore installations. There were Battleships, Cruisers, Aircraft Carriers, Landing Craft and troop ships. Also some commandos landed on nearby islands last night (Aug. 19) Paratroopers also took part.
AG 360.33/030-C
(23 Nov 44)
HQ., KTOUSA, APO 512, U.S. Army, 6 December 1944

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D.C.
(Attn: Casualty Branch)

Forwarded reference URAD 6-66615 dated 22 Nov 44, citing SPAPC-S
For the THEATER COMMANDER.

JACK K ROBERTS
1st Lt., ABD.
Asst. Adjutant General
I, Harold Rau, Jr., 0716945, 2nd Lt. AC, state that on the 22nd August 1944, I was flying as navigator-bombardier of a B-24 type aircraft in which Lt. Ruff of the 758th BSq (H), 459th B Gp (d), was pilot. Sgt. Chamberlain was flying as tail gunner on our aircraft #44-40326. We had experienced no flak or fighters until immediately after bombs away when we ran into a solid curtain of flak. Our hydraulic system was smashed in the bomb bay and our wing tanks were hard hit. We lost our formation almost immediately after, and charted our course for Lake Balaton. About an hour and a half later we had just sighted it when the pilot reported over the interphone that two (2) enemy fighters were closing in on us. We couldn't fire the guns due to the vapor springing from the gas tanks, so we ditched all ammunition, guns, flak suits, and loose equipment to try and maneuver the fighters.Lt. Ruff also rang the alarm bell to "stand by to bail out." The interphone system gave out a moment later. The fighters sent 20mm shells ripping all through the plane but suddenly drew off. I went forward and had the nose gunner go back to see how things were in the waist. A moment later he came back with this report: the ball gunner was dead, the radio operator had severe shrapnel wounds about the face, the waist gunner had one leg nearly shot off and the tail gunner, Sgt. Chamberlain, had apparently misunderstood the signal "stand by to bail out" and had actually bailed out. Possibly his bailing out, together with the smoke that was coming from our bomb bay and pilot's departure caused the enemy fighters to withdraw. Our position at the time was approximately forty six degrees, thirty seven minutes East, seventeen degrees five minutes North, over Hungary. That is all I know what possibly happened to Sgt. Chamberlain.

HAROLD RAU, Wnd Lt., AC
758th Bomb Sq. AAF

A TRUE COPY:

ELLIS L. BURNS, JR.
Cwo, USA.
- 1st Lt. Sidney L. Ruff, Jr.
  Mrs. Sara C. Ruff (Wife)
  202 Folks Street
  Waycross, Georgia

- 2nd Lt. Robert W. Mills
  Mrs. Elizabeth C. Mills (Wife)
  133 North Fort Avenue
  Asheville, North Carolina

- 2nd Lt. Harold Rau, Jr.
  Mr. Harold R. Rau (Father)
  1216 Pine Street
  La Crosse, Wisconsin

- S/Sgt. August H. Dietrich, Jr.
  Mrs. Anna Dietrich (Mother)
  431 Lynwood Avenue
  Trenton, New Jersey

- Sgt. Karl A. Chamberlain
  Mrs. Betty Jane Chamberlain (Wife)
  24 Martinet Avenue
  Rochester, New York

- S/Sgt. Melvin Mendelson
  Mrs. Ida Mendelson (Mother)
  1655 Sterling Place
  Brooklyn, New York

- S/Sgt. Glen L. Allen
  Mrs. Pearl E. Allen (Mother)
  4219 Munagall Street
  Kansas City, Missouri

- Cpl. Albert Marille
  Mrs. Guadalupe Marille (Mother)
  3001 1/2 Grape Street
  San Diego, California

- Cpl. Darwin L. Ritchey
  Mrs. Lillie Ritchey (Mother)
  1112 South Mill Street
  Ferger Falls, Minnesota

- Survivors
MISSING AIR CRAFT REPORT

1. ORGANIZATION: Location Giulia #1, Italy
   Group 459th B GP (H) AAF
   AIR FORCE 15th
   Squadron 758th B Sq
   COURSE 185 degrees true @
   course Bomb

2. SPECIFY: Place of departure Giulia #1, Italy
   Weather Conditions
   Target Bleckhammer, Germany
   Hazy—visibility 10 miles

3. Date 22 Aug 44 Time 1313
   Last known position Lake Balaton, Hungary
   X Last Sighted

4. AIRCRAFT (Lost) (Believed Lost) Not applicable
   AAF Serial Number 44-40 326
   Type, model & series B-24 J
   Nickname
   Engines: Type made & Series R183043
   AAF Serial Number CP 309175
   INSTALLED WEAPONS:
   a. Browning (all)
   b. 992706, 991980, 932390 .50 cal (all)
   c. 991761, 991951, 991428
   d. 1102010, 110539, 991446

5. PERSONNEL LISTED BELOW REPORTED AS (X) Battle Casualty
   NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT
   Status Total
   Crew 9
   Passengers
   1. Pilot Huff, Sidney L., Jr. 1st Lt. 0705144
      LWA Rtd 2-Sep 44
      CP Mills, Robert N 2nd Lt. 0767608
      Lwa Rtd 1-Sep 44
      B Haus, Harold, Jr. 2nd Lt. 0716945
      Rtd
      Eng Gnr Womandson, Kelvin S/Sgt. 12086358
      KIA
      Aer Gnr Hitchings, Darwin L Sgt. 37577188
      KIA
      " " Chamberlain, Earl A. Sgt. 412167258
      KIA Left Wrist Gunshot
      LSG " " Durmillo, Albert Cpl 47294002
      KIA
      Rad Opr " Dietrich, August N. Jr. S/Sgt. 32750987
      KIA Rtd 29 a-9-44 Shrapnel
      Wounds
      ASSG " " Allen, Glen L. Cpl 37240144
      KIA
      " NMO, Jul 44

6. Identify below those persons who are believed to have last knowledge of aircraft
   and check appropriate (one only) column to indicate basis for same
   Harold Haus, Jr. 2nd Lt. 0716945 Last Sighted X

7. If Personnel are believed to have survived X(Parachutes were used)

TRUE COPY

Signed ELLIS L. BURNS JR
CHQ, USA

None

Signature of preparing officer
ALBERT C. LISKO
Capt., AC
ADJ.
STATEMENT

Sgt Earl A. Chamberlain, 12167958, was reported Missing in Action on an aerial bombardment mission over Hungary on 22 August 1944. He was flying in a US Army aircraft, type B-24J, No. 44-40326 as Tail Gunner. According to statements which were attached to the Missing Air Crew Report the aircraft was hard hit by flak immediately after the target (Bleckhammer, Germany). Unable to keep up with the formation the straggling plane was attacked near Lake Balaton, Hungary, by two enemy fighters. Pilot, Lieutenant Huff, ordered 'stand by to bail out' just as the fighters made their first pass and the interphone system went out. Sgt Chamberlain apparently misunderstood the order and actually bailed out at that point. Fighters withdrew upon seeing the parachute and plane going into a steep dive. Aircraft later ditched in Adriatic and four (4) crew members rescued.

ALBERT C. LISCO
Capt. Air Corps
Adjutant.
THROW ME A KISS "BIG BOY"
This is just about how I felt in the company of some Chicago's ladies. Nice folks, though.

I WANT'A WIRE THE SKIPPER FOR EXTRA LEAVE TO GROOVE WITH A SICK AUNT

YESSICK AUNTIE

Drawn by one of my buddies.
One of the reasons we don't get any more leave than we do.

Dagwood - also drawn by my buddy. Pretty good, huh?
Mrs. L. A. Ritchey  
1112 South Mill Street  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Dear Mrs. Ritchey:

In reply to your letter requesting home addresses of members of your son's crew, the following are listed:

Pilot:
2nd Lt. Sidney L. Ruff Jr., (Sara L. Ruff, Wife)  
202 Folks Street, Waycross, Ga.

Co-Pilot:
2nd Lt. Robert W. Mills, (Elizabeth C. Mills, Wife)  
133 Montford Ave, Asheville, N. C.

2nd Lt. Harold Rau (Mr. Harold B. Rau, Father)  
1216 Pine Street, LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

2nd Lt. Roland J. Koengster, (Mr. Edwin G. Koengster, Father)  
910 South Main St, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Sgt. Earl A. Chamberlain, (Allen Chamberlain, Father)  
764 University Ave, Rochester, New York.

S/Sgt. August M. Dietrich, (August M. Dietrich, Father)  
431 Tynwood Ave, Trenton, New Jersey

Sgt. John H. Williams Jr., (Mae Williams, Mother)  
935 Ashburton Ave, Baltimore, Md.

Cpl. Glen L. Allen, (Pearl Allen, Mother)  
4219 Montgoll, Kansas City, Mo.

Pvt. Albert Murillo, (Guadalupe Murillo, Mother)  
3001½ Grape Street, San Diego, California.

If some of the above addresses prove inadequate or incorrect, we regret that they are the only addresses available at this headquarters.

Yours sincerely,

E. F. Borrecco  
1st Lt., Air Corps  
Personnel Officer.
THE PURPLE HEART AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY

The Purple Heart was originally established by General George Washington at Newburgh, 7 August 1782, during the War of the Revolution. The decoration was revived by the War Department on 22 February 1932, the two-hundredth anniversary of General Washington's birth, thus paying respect to his memory and recognizing his military achievements. It is awarded to persons who, while serving in any capacity with the Army of the United States, are wounded in action against an enemy of the United States, or who since 6 December 1941 are killed in action, or who die as a direct result of wounds received in action.

The following is a brief description of the Purple Heart: The decoration consists of a purple enameled heart within a bronze border on which is mounted in relief a profile head of General Washington in military uniform. Above the enameled heart is the shield of Washington's coat of arms between two sprays of leaves in green enamel. On the reverse below the shield and leaves without enamel, is a raised bronze heart with the inscription, "For Military Merit", under which is engraved the name of the recipient. The medal is suspended by a rectangular-shaped metal loop with corners rounded from a silk moire ribbon of purple center with white edges.

The complete Purple Heart decoration consists of the medal, the service ribbon or bar in the colors of the suspension ribbon of the medal, and a lapel button in colored enamel. When the Purple Heart is awarded posthumously only the decoration itself is furnished.

Neither the Purple Heart nor any of the devices which accompany it are authorized to be worn by anyone other than the individual for whose service they are awarded. The individuals for whose service they are awarded may wear the Purple Heart decoration on appropriate occasions; and are authorized to wear the service ribbon or bar on the uniform, and the lapel button when in civilian clothing. Recipients of posthumous awards of the Purple Heart may display the decoration in the opened container or in any other appropriate manner desired.

J. A. ULIQ,
Major General,
The Adjutant General.

18 May 1944.
Cpl. Darwin Ritchey (left above), graduated from a combat training course at Peterson Field, Colorado Springs, Colo., on June 16. He is an upper turret gunner and has been in the service since October 5, 1942. Since graduation he has been transferred to Lincoln, Neb. His address is Cpl. Darwin Ritchey, 3757-7160, Sec. K1273rd AAF, Base Unit SE, Lincoln Army Air Field, Lincoln, Neb.

Pvt. Mayron Ritchey (right), has arrived safely overseas and is now in England according to word received by his family in this city. Pvt. Ritchey has been in the service since September, 1943, and is in the infantry. His address is Pvt. Mayron Ritchey, 3668-4520, Infantry, APO 18305, % Postmaster, New York, N. Y.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Title</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMY SERIAL NUMBER</td>
<td>37577188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>RITCHET#DARWIN#L########</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDENCE: STATE</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>MINNESOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDENCE: COUNTY</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>OTTER TAIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACE OF ENLISTMENT</td>
<td>7435</td>
<td>FT SNELLING MINNESOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF ENLISTMENT DAY</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF ENLISTMENT MONTH</td>
<td>09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE OF ENLISTMENT YEAR</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADE: ALPHA DESIGNATION</td>
<td>PVT#</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRADE: CODE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRANCH: ALPHA DESIGNATION</td>
<td>NO#</td>
<td>No branch assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRANCH: CODE</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>No branch assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIELD USE AS DESIRED</td>
<td>#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERM OF ENLISTMENT</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Enlistment for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LONGEVITY</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>###</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOURCE OF ARMY PERSONNEL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Civil Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIVITY</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>MINNESOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR OF BIRTH</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACE AND CITIZENSHIP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>White, citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 years of high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIVILIAN OCCUPATION</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>Undefined Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARITAL STATUS</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Single, without dependents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPONENT OF THE ARMY</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Selectees (Enlisted Men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARD NUMBER</td>
<td>#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX NUMBER</td>
<td>1233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FILM REEL NUMBER</td>
<td>4.143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>