

A Mission Memory: Forced Landing

Our mother, Dee (Edwards) Fastenau, enjoyed on occasion telling the story of how she had received a letter from our dad while he was serving in Italy in which there were some pressed wildflowers. A romantic gesture—his plane had been forced to land and he collected the wildflowers while they waited for it to be repaired. (Maureen Fastenau)

Ivey Nelson (Brownie) Brown in 2012 letter provided more details of this event: "We were coming back from a mission. For some reason, we had lost one engine. We had cleared the Alps, but somewhere, as we got back close to the Adriatic Sea, we lost another engine, but not on the same side of the plane, so we were under control, but steadily losing altitude. It looked like we might have to ditch in the sea, so we tried to throw everything with any weight out of the plane and into the sea. We were lucky and did make it to land in Yugoslavia.

I remember a young (maybe 17 year old) Partisan soldier being sent out to guard our plane, and I was selected to stay with him. He was draped in ammunition with a big red star on his cap. We could not talk, but there were smiles and hand motions that made things friendly. We got the plane fixed and flew back to Cerignola the next day. We did have a few anxious moments, but all's well that ends well."