

15th AAF IN ITALY: Most people would hesitate and think twice before deciding to hang by their feet from a fast moving airplane at an altitude of thirteen thousand (13,000) feet. Such wasn't the case with Sgt. Richard E. Hintz, B, son of Mrs. Vernie Riley, 3rd and Adams Streets, Tolleson, Arizona, a ball turret gunner on an Italian based Liberator bomber. Sgt. Hintz, without hesitation or regard for personal danger, performed his 'man on the flying trapeze' act while returning from a 15th Air Force attack on Nazi gun emplacements near Toulon, France.

Over the target the bomb bay doors on Sgt. Hintz's big bomber failed to open. Knowing that the wedged doors offered no barrier to the powerful thousand pounders, the bombardier pulled the release switch. As was expected the bombs crashed through toward the target, leaving the bomb bay doors swinging from their hinges. About this time one of the engines on the ~~plane~~ went out. Ordinarily this would have been no handicap, for a Liberator can easily fly on only three engines. The added drag of the open bomb bay, however, forced the plane to lose altitude rapidly. In an effort to lighten the load all excess ammunition was thrown overboard. The Lib continued to drop. There was no <sup>A</sup> alternative but to make an attempt to close the flapping doors.

Without hesitation Sgt. Hintz and another member of the crew voluntarily descended into the bomb bay. Hanging by their feet and with the aid of hooks fashioned from arming wire the two men fished for the swinging doors. After forty five (45) minutes of breath-taking angling, they succeeded in securing and fastening the open doors.



"There's no doubt that the work of these two men was directly responsible for the safe return of our plane," said the pilot, Capt. Nelson S. Hill, 29, 15 Penn Avenue, Flemington, N.J.

Sgt. Hintz entered the Air Corps on May 19, 1943, and received his gunnery training at the Army Air Base, Ft. Meyers, Fla. He has taken part in sixteen combat missions over enemy territory, and has been awarded the Air Medal.

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