



2ND LT. LEWIS S. BALL

1ST AF, FIRST COMMAND, 113TH ARMY AIR FORCE BASE (WING) D SQUADRON,

UNIT COMBAT CREW 193, CHARLESTON, SC

HE WAS KILLED JUNE 20, 1944, SOMEWHERE AT SEA, NASSAU, BAHAMAS TO CHARLESTON, SC

I never knew my father but I am told that I look just like him, his eyes, his smile, his sense of fun and laughter, and his intelligence. I've have gleaned information from documents found after my mother died in 2004. I was born in November 1944, five months after his death.

Louie, as he was called, was born April 3, 1922 to Frank Ball and Anna Kudzia Ball in Harwick, PA. They were a stalwart Polish family and devout Roman Catholics. Louie was a Boy Scout and a member of the championship first aid team of PA. Louie worked at Duquesne Light Company, Harwick mine before enlisting in the Army, against the wishes of his mother. They say Louie had the best sense of humor and was full of fun. While at Westover AAF, MA, Louie sent for information about raising minks. He was looking forward, ahead to life at the end of the war.

He was interested in radios and was first trained by the army as a radio mechanic at Patterson, OH. From there he went to Camp McCoy in WI.

Louie easily passed tests for pilot's training. He loved flying but shared with his younger brother, Henry, that he was a bit afraid too. He knew he'd be flying B-24's in the midst of the war. His initial pre-flight training was at Maxwell Field, AL where he married his hometown sweetheart, Helen Konesky June 12, 1943.

He was commissioned at the Eastern Flying Training Command, Freeman Field in Seymour Indiana, January 7, 1944. He had further specialized pilot training on four engines at Smyrna Army Air Field in TN from January through March 1944, where he was attached to the 665th squadron. The reviewing officer recommending him for commander of B-24's wrote, "He is always alert and aggressive. I would want Lewis on my flight." Lewis was also stationed at Greenville, MS and Westover Field, MA.

His final station was the 113th AA Base Unit at Charleston Army Air field, Charleston, South Carolina.

On the return of his fateful flight from Nassau, Bahamas back to Charleston, SC, on June 20, 1944 Lewis disappeared along with the other nine men of Combat crew 193 and the plane. The photo of this missing crew is a lifetime treasure for me.

A letter to his wife reads in part . . . "route was from Charleston to West Palm Beach, FL to Nassau, to Charleston, a distance of 1,110 miles requiring approximately six hours flying time. There were 16 ships making this flight at five minute intervals at this particular time. Three radio reports indicated normal progress. At 8:15PM the plane reported that it was low on gasoline and was proceeding to Daytona Beach, FL. At 8:30 PM they called again and said they had changed heading to Jacksonville, FL. That was the last message received.

After sufficient time elapsed for the plane to reach Jacksonville, the East Coast Aircraft Warning Net was alerted to stand by for messages from the lost plane. Radar Stations and Direction finding Stations were alerted with negative results. A search mission was organized and forty B-24's took off at dawn to search areas in which it was contemplated the ship could have gone down. The Navy was contacted and they sent numerous flying boats, blimps and all available surface craft to search the area. Search was continued for three days and nights without favorable results . . .

It seems hard and inhuman to give up searching but experts advised us that any hope of survival in this section of the Atlantic for more than 48 hours could not be expected. The crew carried regular overwater equipment and had been thoroughly trained on its use in an emergency.

Lewis' death was an honorable one as he was on an assigned mission and carrying out orders to the best of his ability. The exact nature of his loss cannot be determined from information available. The airplane was properly serviced with fuel for his flight and four hours reserve. The weather was excellent. Other planes on this flight reported no incidents enroute."

Another letter from the Catholic Chaplain ends, "Lewis would want us to accept it as the will of God. Rest assured that he is safe, either on a raft or in the Arms of his God in Heaven."

While I know of no specific marker or memorial, my father and his Combat Crew 193 are memorialized in the reference book, "Fatal Army Air Force Aviation Accidents in the U.S.," by Anthony Mireles.

In his class 44-training book from Maxwell Field, AL the forward in part references the lines that they will all be called to hold in combat and says, "We chose to hold the sky." It also reads, "We know that we are not immortal."

Lewis S. Ball chose to hold the sky and holds it through eternity.

In Loving Memory,

Patricia Ball Morrison