

STORY #2A SYNOPSIS

Sgt Morris C. Peck- MIA/KIA

OCTOBER 7, 1944



Born- Middlebury, VT
20 Years Old

744TH BS, 456TH BG
B-24J Liberator bomber

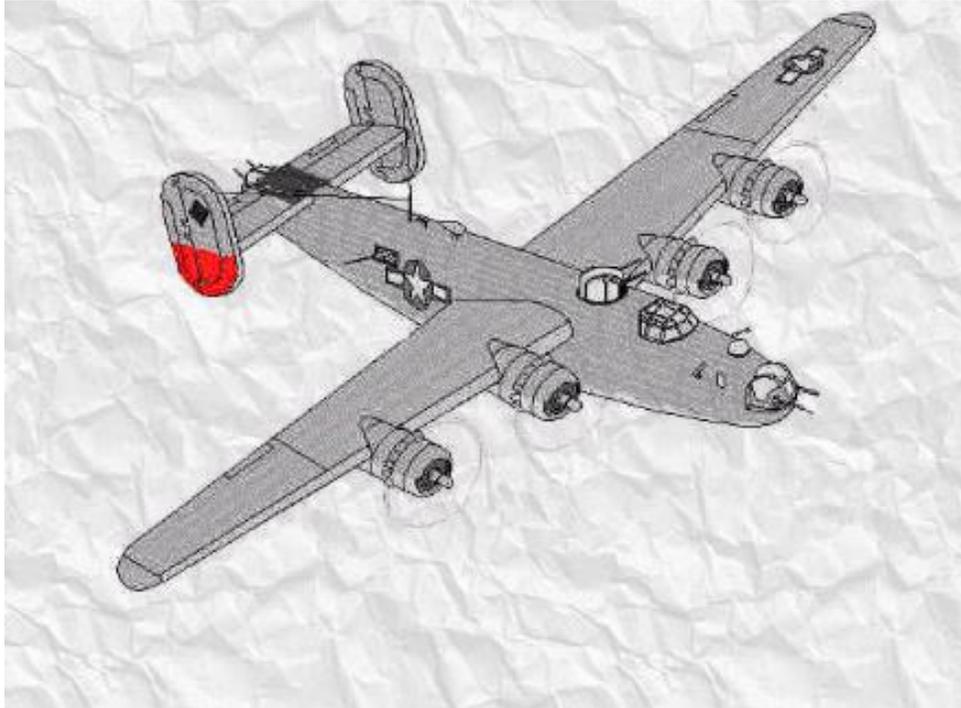
- Radio Operator & Waist Gunner
- Returning from bombing mission to Vienna, Austria
- Three engines damaged by flack & running out of fuel
- Runway blocked by mired bomber- forced to bail out
- Seven crew landed on Vis, three in the Adriatic
- Sgt. Dicranian drowned in bay, body recovered
- Sgts. Peck and Garr landed in sea and bodies never recovered



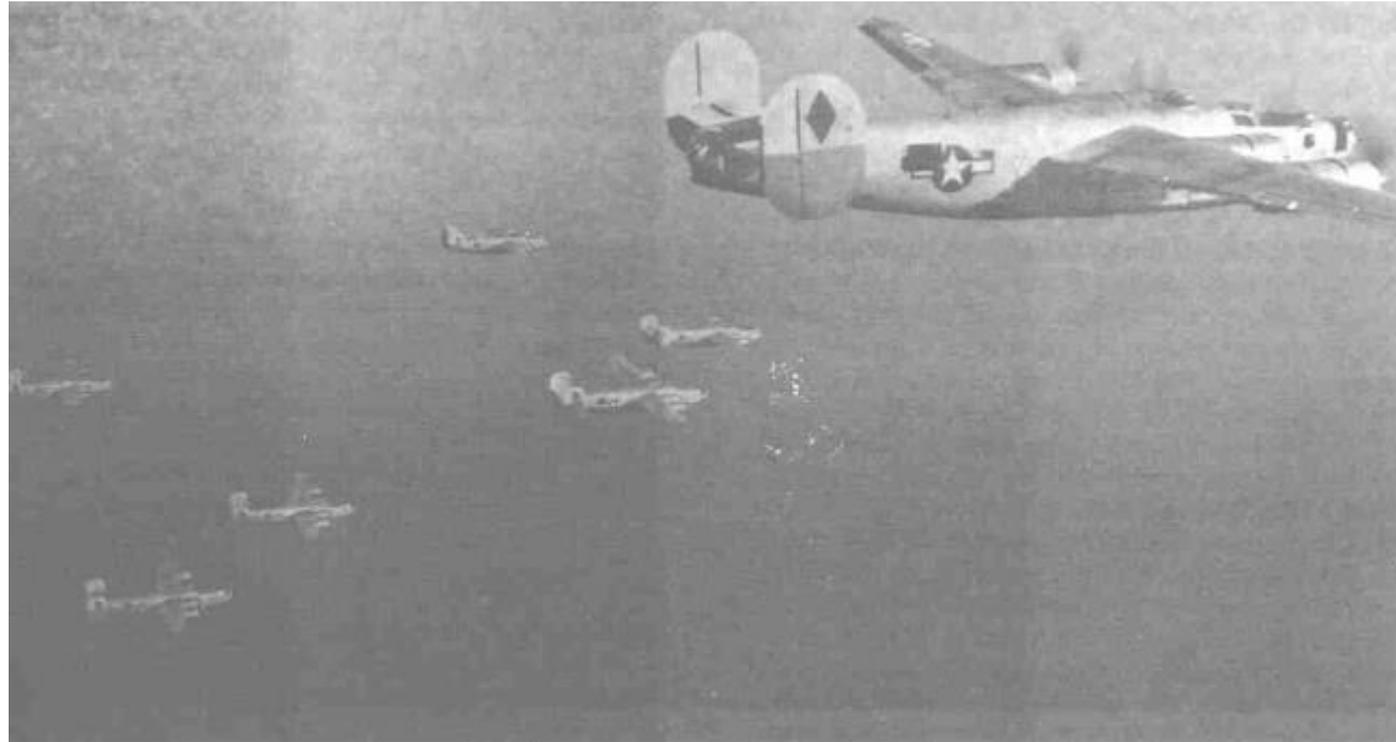
456th Bomb Group

- Stornara, Italy - December 1943-April 1945
- Steed's Flying Colts
- Four bomb squadrons: 744th, 745th, 746th & 747th
- B-24 Liberator heavy bombers with 10-man crews: pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, radio operator/waist gunner, engineer/waist gunner, nose gunner, tail gunner, ball turret gunner, and top gunner
- Ten Browning 50 cal. machine guns
- Flew 249 missions & dropped 14,000 tons of bombs – 91 B-24s lost in combat





LEFT: B-24 Liberator Bomber with tail marking of the 744th BS. 4 guns can be seen: nose, top turret, right waist (behind the star) and tail. Left waist Gun (other side) and ball turret gun (under the plane, not shown)



RIGHT: B-24s in formation on a bombing mission.

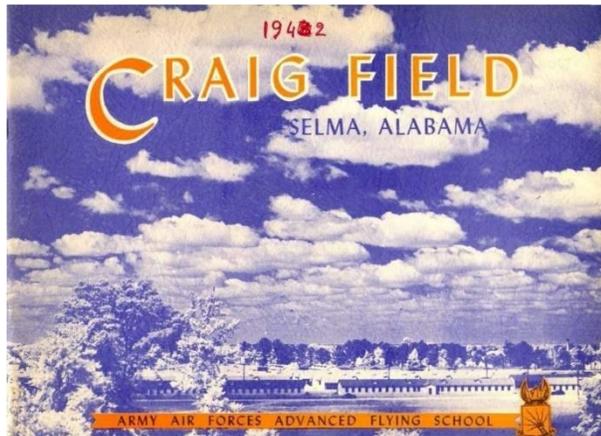
Morris Colby Peck

- Born on April 11, 1924 & grew up in Middlebury, Vermont (100th birthday in 2024)
- His father, George Warren Peck, was a WWI veteran in France
- Loved hunting, fishing, repairing cars and maple syrup

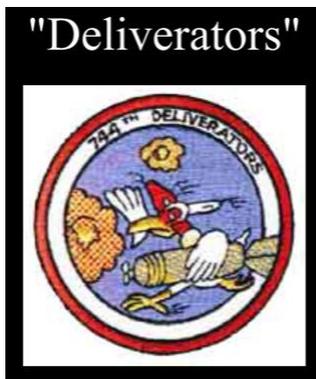


Training

- Enlisted in AAF on September 18, 1942
- Trained as a gunner and radio operator at US bases throughout 1942-1943 and through July 1944







744th Bomb Squadron

- Flew with crew in B-24 to Stornara, Italy from July 20th to August 4th 1944
- From 1 to 40 planes went on each mission, with an average of about 15 to 24.
- Sgt. Morris Peck's first mission was on August 10th
- Earlier in the war, the requirement was 25 total missions, but now it was 50
- Morris would fly on 30 credited missions

August 10th: "Well, today I went on my first mission and now have 49 to go."

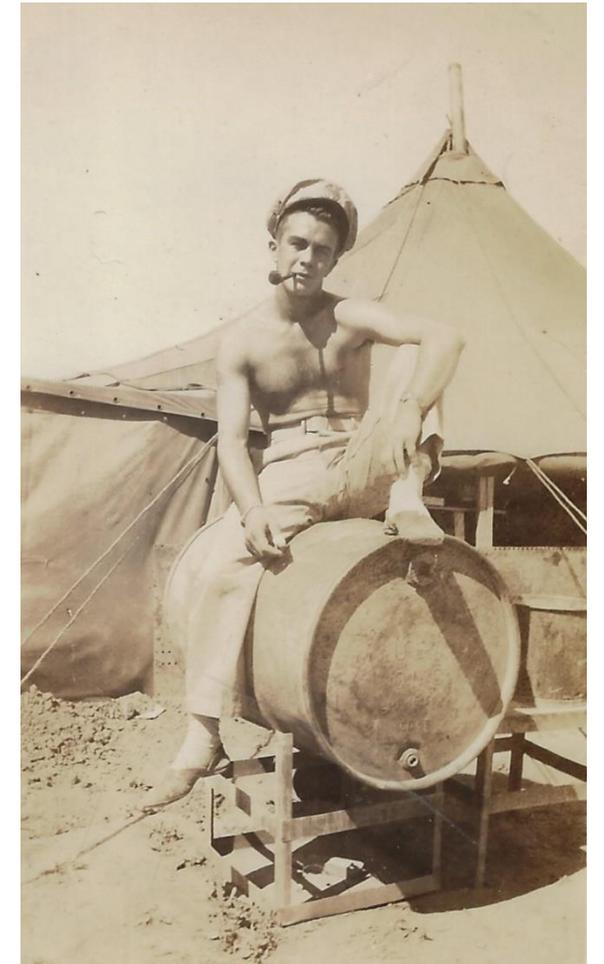


On base before take-off, September 1944.

Top. Lt. Vogel, pilot, Lt. Collins, bombardier, Lt. Wolf, co-pilot, Lt. Driver. Navigator.

Sitting Middle: Sgt. Hall, Cpl. Peck, Cpl. Garr, Sgt. Moore.

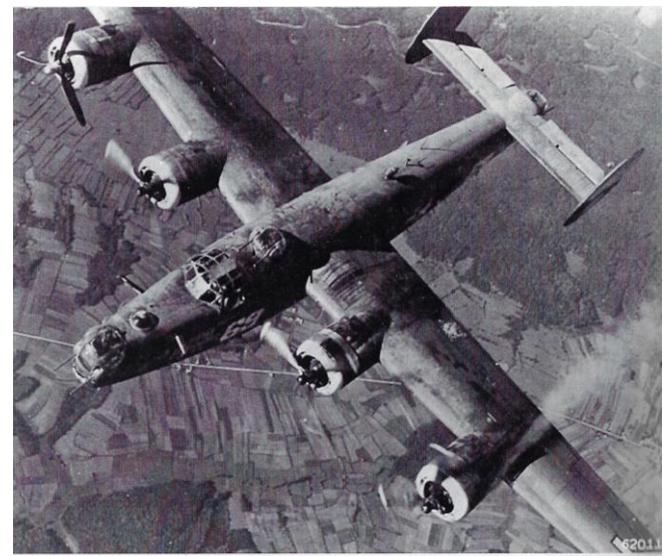
Sitting Front: Sgt. Thompson, Sgt. Dicranian



Morris relaxing

October 7, 1944

- Mission to Vienna- Winterhafen Oil Depot
- After bombs away, hit by flak knocking out two engines
- Third engine ran out of fuel on way back.
- Radioed tower at Vis island emergency airstrip –runway blocked by a B-24
- Pilot Vogel gave “bail out” command as he flew over the airstrip



Navigator Lt Daniel Driver

“We called Vis Tower and asked if we could land. They would not let us land as there was a plane stuck in the mud on the runway. They gave us the choice of bailing out over the island or going back to the coast of Italy [about 120 miles] and landing there. We elected to try and make the Italian coast. When we were approximately five minutes from the island of Vis at approximately 43N-16E, #3 engine ran out of gasoline. We then headed back to the island of Vis running all three engines off #4 fuel cell. When over the island of Vis, we bailed out at 4,000 feet. The coordinates when we bailed out were 43/02N-16/12E at approximately 1615 hours.”

See MACR #9040

From “Vis-The Last Hope”, pages 218-219

October 7, 1944:

US 15th Air Force launched massive attack in the Vienna area with heavy bombers. Four damaged B-24 Liberator heavy bombers force landed in a row and caused confusion on the landing strip. This made the crews of another three Liberators which circled waiting for the landing strip to be cleared to bail out in the vicinity of the island. Very strong wind (Sirocco) prevailed with choppy seas. One Catalina seaplane, HSL 2537 (F/Lt. Watson) and two naval launches were dispatched to the area. One naval launch rescued one American airman, but despite of immediate medical measures, the survivor succumbed on arrival to port of Komiža. HSL 2537 took two survivors from a Partisan fishing ship which also contained one dead airman. The majority of the airmen who bailed out safely landed at the island. The combined rescue mission resulted with 23 rescued, three dead and four missing American airmen. ASR vessels continued the search until one hour after darkness, but with no results.

Note: Only one of the 4 B-24s that force landed has been identified. It was piloted by 2d Lt. Warren Maust of 721st BS, 450th BG. See recording and story on slide 24.



The crew of the Catalina seaplane rescuing the crew of a B-24 that went into the sea off Vis on 7th October 1944.. (USAF)

“Vis-The Last Hope” continued

One of the three B-24s where the crew bailed out over Vis was B-24J S/N 42-78319 (pilot 1st Lt. Edward C Vogel) of 456th BG 744th BS. Immediately after dropping bombs on Winterhafen oil refinery near Vienna, it was hit by German flak in the bomb bay. Splintered shards pierced fuel tanks 1, 2 and 3 and the fuel started leaking into the bomb bay. When they were over the Adriatic, engine No. 1 ran out of fuel and stopped. The pilot had no choice but to turn back to Vis. But the Flying Control on Vis did not give permission for landing since another B-24 was stuck in the middle of the strip, so they decided to proceed to Stornara base in Italy. Soon after, engine No. 3 stopped too, and they decided to turn back to Vis, where the crew bailed out at position 43.02 N and 16.12 E. According to the records obtained, the crew bailed out over the southeast part of the island, i.e. west of Rukavac. It is highly possible that the aircraft crashed into the sea, which was confirmed by testimonies from other crews.

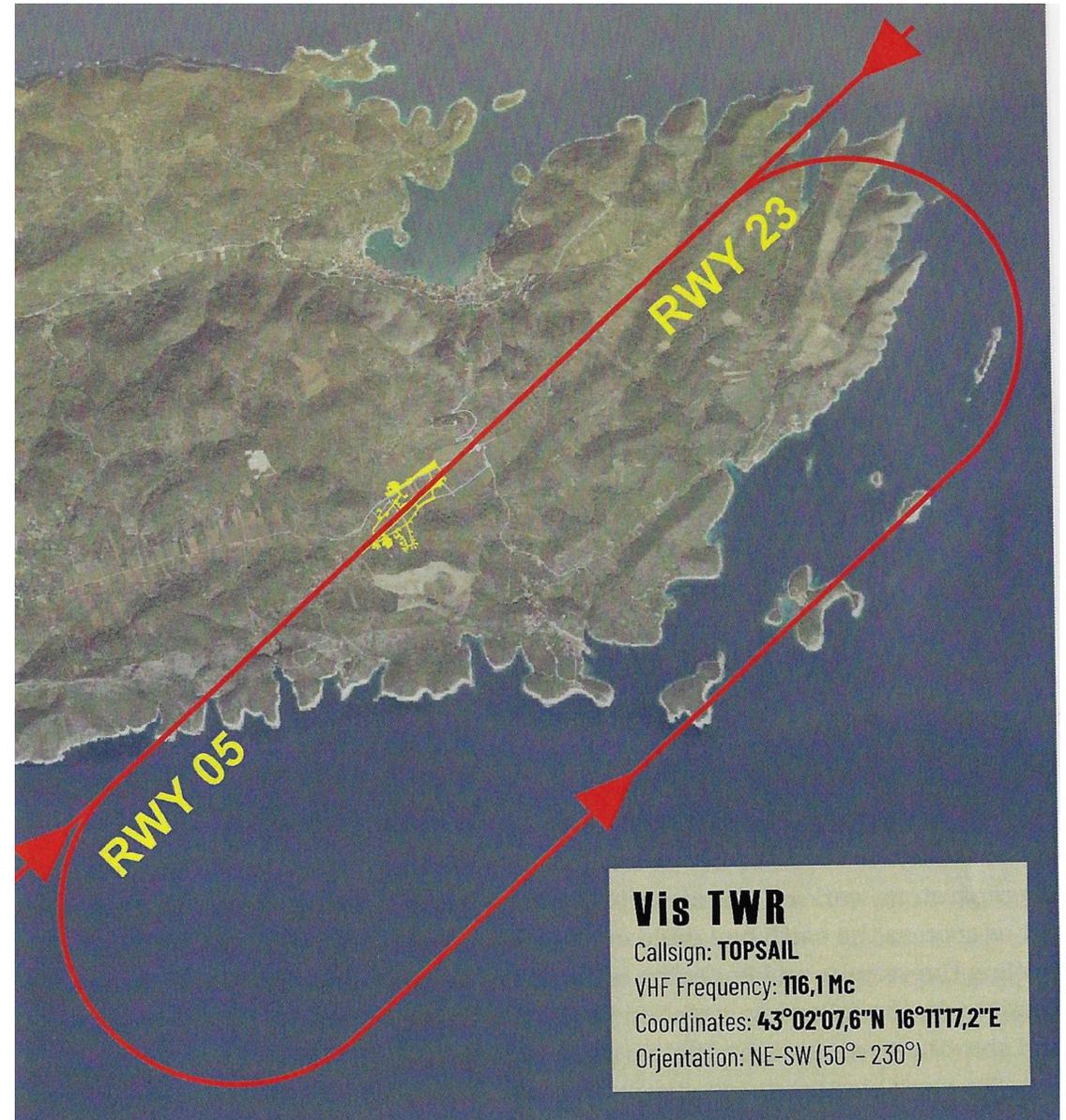
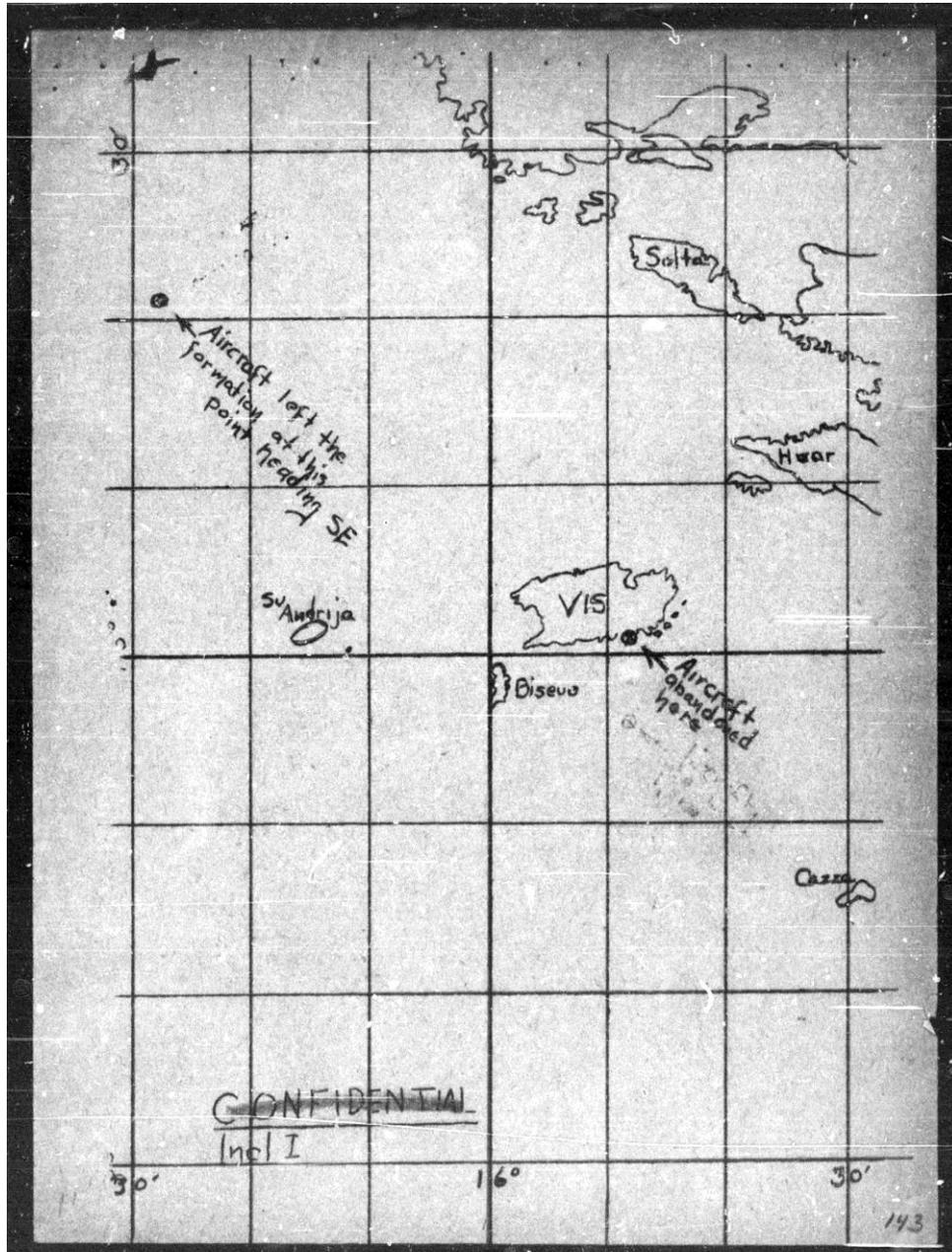
“Vis-The Last Hope” continued

The second B-24J, S/N 42-51848 (pilot 1st Lt. Louis McClumsey) of 450th BG 722nd BS, was also returning from the bombing mission of Winterhafen oil refinery to Manduria base in Italy. It was damaged, and due to fuel loss asked for permission to land on Vis. Since Flying Control refused permission owing to the B-24 stuck on the landing strip, the pilot activated the autopilot and the whole crew bailed out. Four airmen landed on the island, while the remaining six were carried over the sea by strong winds at Rukavac. Rescue launches picked up two, found two bodies, and the remaining two went missing.

The third B-24 (serial number unknown) of 450th BG, damaged as well, managed to reach Vis where the crew bailed out. All landed safely, although some were slightly injured. Even this plane, whose S/N remains unknown, probably crashed into the sea.

One of the Liberators which, despite the partly blocked landing strip, surprisingly managed to land on Vis Airfield was B-24H-15-DT S/N 41-28861 #69 Burma Bound of 451st BG 724th BS flown by 1st Lt. George Tudor (SEE STORY #4A).

VIS- The Last Hope – never captured by the Germans



Lt. Edward Vogel - Pilot

“Shortly after [the order to bail out] Morris called me over the interphone and said the waist was clear, wished me luck and said he was bailing out. The men then started jumping out of the bomb bay. I remained at the controls until the rest of the men had jumped. As I left the ship, the two remaining engines stopped from lack of fuel.

“[Morris] did a wonderful job all the way back until we decided to leave the ship. We were in contact by radio at all times and it was he who supervised the jumping from that part of the ship. He called me just before he jumped and said he was the last one to leave the waist. I had more confidence in Morris than anyone on the crew, yet I had to marvel at his coolness in handling things.

*Even his last words were cheerful and showed no evidence of fear. He said ‘**Good luck Ed, see you downstairs.**’ That was the first time he had called me ‘Ed’.”*



- Seven bailed out over island & landed successfully
- Three went into the Adriatic Sea due to strong gale winds
 - Sgt Johnny Dicranian drowned in bay
 - Sgts. Morris Peck and Louis Garr bodies never recovered
- Searched for 6 months- officially designated KIA in 1948

Bomber Crew- B-24G SN 42-78319

#	Crew Position	Name	Rank	Service #	Age	M/S?	Home Town	Birth	Death	Age	Fate
1	Pilot	Edward C. VOGEL	1LT	0-820859	28	M	San Francisco, CA	3/31/1916	8/21/1973	57	RTD
2	Co-Pilot	Milton WOLF	2LT	0--1692840	21	S	Brooklyn, NY	10/19/1922	11/12/1997	75	RTD
3	Navigator	Daniel DRIVER	2LT	0-717401	20	M	Berkley, CA	5/8/1924	7/24/2017	97	RTD
4	Bombardier	Robert T. ALLER	1LT	0-703022	24	S	Wappinger Falls, NY	6/1/1920	6/16/1991	71	RTD
5	Engineer/LWG	Leon H. MORRELL	Cpl	34054386	35	S	Columbus, GA	4/23/1909	6/27/1967	58	RTD
6	Radioman/RWG	Morris C. PECK	Sgt	11084963	20	S	Middlebury, VT	4/11/1924	10/7/1944	20	KIA
7	Nose Turret Gunner	George J. THOMPSON	Sgt	33702447	25	M	East Carnegie, PA	8/30/1919	2/16/1999	79	RTD
8	Upper Turret Gunner	Louis J. GARR	Sgt	38508991	20	M	Van Buren, AR	8/11/1924	10/7/1944	20	KIA
9	Ball Turret Gunner	Rush I. MOORE, Jr.	SSgt	14091135	23	S	Birmingham, AL	7/19/1921	6/3/2011	89	RTD
10	Tail Turret Gunner	Herant J. DICRANIAN	Sgt	31339891	21	S	Pittsfield, MA	6/29/1923	10/7/1944	21	KIA
<u>Sick on 10/7:</u>											
11	Bombardier	Arnold R. COLLINS	2LT	16004205	28	M	Chicago, ILL	12/9/1915	1/10/1982	66	RTD
12	Engineer/LWG	Marion HALL	Sgt	33739727	22	M	Abbeville, SC	5/20/1922	8/29/1994	72	RTD

Sgt. Morris Colby Peck- 20 years old

- Reported KIA to parents until March 1, 1945
- 1952- Italian fishermen found the chute 7 ID tags of Sgt. Peck off the island of San Andrea – 25 miles west of Vis
- Morris received the Purple Heart
- His mother, Marie Premo Peck, became a “Gold Star Mother” for life
- His parents- George & Marie – didn’t talk much about Morris

Sgt. Morris Peck Of Middlebury Reported Killed

Special to the Free Press

MIDDLEBURY, March 6.—Staff Sgt. Morris Peck has been reported killed in action Oct. 7, according to word received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George W. Peck. He had previously been reported missing on a mission to Australia.



Morris Peck

He enlisted for service Sept. 11, 1942, and received his basic training at Selma, Ala., advanced radio school at Scott field, Ill., gunnery school at Yuma, Ariz., Westover field, Mass., and in South Carolina before going overseas. He was graduated from Middlebury high school in June, 1942.

In recognition of meritorious achievement in operational flights he was awarded the air medal and one oak leaf cluster.

His brother, Second Lieut. William Peck, is at home from Camp Robinson, Ark., on an emergency leave.



Memorial on his parent's living room wall
Now on nephew Jeff Peck's camp on Lake Dunmore in VT



IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

Corporal Morris C. Peck, A.S.No. 11084963,

WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY AT

in the Mediterranean Area, October 7, 1944.

HE STANDS IN THE UNBROKEN LINE OF PATRIOTS WHO HAVE DARED TO DIE

THAT FREEDOM MIGHT LIVE, AND GROW, AND INCREASE ITS BLESSINGS.

FREEDOM LIVES, AND THROUGH IT, HE LIVES—

IN A WAY THAT HUMBLER THE UNDERTAKINGS OF MOST MEN

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PURSUANT TO AUTHORITY VESTED IN HIM BY CONGRESS
HAS AWARDED THE

PURPLE HEART

ESTABLISHED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT NEWBURGH, NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1782
TO

Corporal Morris C. Peck, A.S.No. 11084963,

FOR MILITARY MERIT AND FOR WOUNDS RECEIVED
IN ACTION

resulting in his death October 7, 1944.

OFFICIAL: GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 13th DAY OF April 19 45

MAJOR GENERAL
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

HENRY L. STIMSON
SECRETARY OF WAR

2011 Interview with Lt. Daniel Driver, the navigator on the October 7, 1944 event*

I was able to tell them where the island was, it was our refuge. It was the island of Vis.



CLICK on the arrow below the symbol above or click mouse to listen

- Courtesy of Roger Davis, his son-in-law, Albion CA. 10 minutes, 30 seconds. Daniel Driver died at age 97 on July 24, 2017

DANIEL DRIVER, 1st Lt., navigator. Born on May 8, 1924 in San Jose, CA. Completed high school, and one year of college in San Jose, until he enlisted in the armed forces in San Francisco, CA in December 1942.



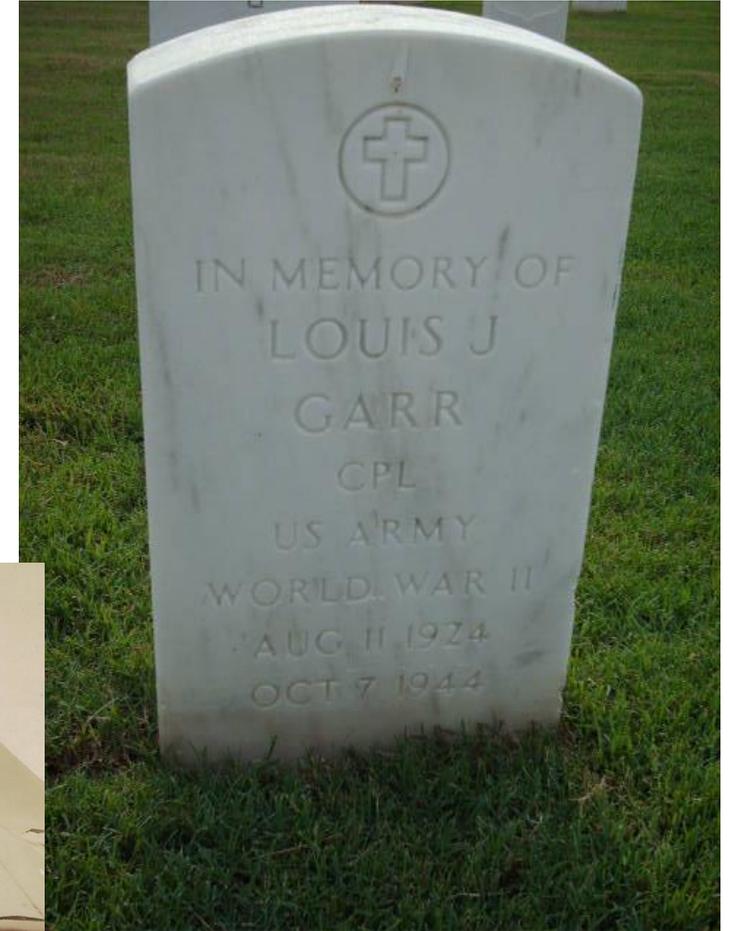
After pre-flight and navigation training, he joined his crew in April 1944. After training together, the crew ferried a B-24 to Italy, was assigned to the 744th Squadron of the 456th Bomb Group. By the time Dan returned to the U.S. in March 1945, he had flown 34 missions. His greatest adventure was having to bail out of the B-24 over Vis, off the coast of Yugoslavia, and returning to Bari by boat a day later.

He was discharged in September 1945, and immediately resumed his studies. He has degrees in architecture and city planning, and worked in planning and housing for local and Federal Government, retiring in 1978.

Rest in Peace Crew members KIA



Sgt. Johnny Dicranian
Tail Gunner
age 21



Cpl. Louis J. Garr
Upper Turret Gunner
age 20

Sept '44
Johnny Dicranian
TAIL GUNNER
LAST KNOWN PICTURE

Pilot Edward Vogel (1916-1973)



December 1944 letter to the Peck family from Mrs. Vogel:
“Ed was mostly damaged by losing his three boys than anything else. They had to dope him six nights so he could sleep. He felt as though He should not have had them bail out. “

2014 recording from navigator of B-24 that
landed on October 7th earlier (one of 4)
1Lt. Joseph Geary of 721st Bs 450th BG



Front Row - Left to Right:

2nd Lt. Clifford H. Cadis - Co-Pilot
2nd Lt. Warren F. Maust - Pilot
1st Lt. Joseph W. Geary Jr. - Navigator
2nd Lt. Robert P. Hasbrook - Bombardier

Back Row - Left to Right:

Cpl. Albert R. Johnson - Asst Radio
Cpl. Joseph E. Zdun - Waist Gunner
Cpl. Robert A. Chadak - Radio Operator
Cpl. Robert H. Munsey - Ball Turret
Sgt. Orris L. Aldrich - Engineer
Cpl. Charles H. Bardroff - Asst Engineer



CLICK on the arrow below the
symbol above or click mouse to
listen



1Lt Geary
Navigator



Bottoms Up at Vis Airfield

Trip to Croatia – October 2-8, 2023

- In search of traces of Morris – to see where he died and better write him into the Peck Family History
- Jim and Jeff Peck, his nephews
- Met three helpful men:
 - Niall Brannigan- retired State Dept. MIA official & author of “Allied Presence on Vis”
 - Danijel Frka- diver & author of “Vis-The Last Hope”
 - Velimir Mratinic – fig farmer & WWII museum owner (now Vis WWII Memorial Center)



October 2024



Vis WWII Memorial Center

- Dream of Velimir Mratinic –expand his small museum
- Working since November, 2023 on this- Advisory Group meeting via Zoom
- Sponsored by the National Federation of Croatian Americans Cultural Foundation (NFCACF) with 90,000 members and the Croatian Military History Foundation (CMHF)
- Supported by the US Embassy in Croatia
- A new non-profit "Foundation for the Island of Vis History" will oversee the Center
- Will memorialize the Allied airmen who landed or tried to land on the emergency airstrip on Vis in 1944-5, and the Partisans who ran the airstrip and assisted the Allies.
- The lives of over 4,000 Allied airmen were saved by the airstrip and the actions of the RAF and Partisans there.

Proud to be Supporters
of the
Vis WWII Memorial Center!

In Memory of our Uncle
Sgt Morris Colby Peck

Nephews Jim & Jeff Peck

