

MID-AIR CRASH JULY 12TH 1944

On July 12th 1944, a formation of American Bombers coming from Great Britain and whose mission was the city of Munich in Germany, flew over the small village of Perlé in the North of Luxembourg. Some of the bombers were B-17s belonging to the 385th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force.

For reasons unknown, two of the B-17s collided, and crashed.

The two Flying Fortresses were B-17 number 42-31917 "Curley's Kids" and number 42-102606 "Off Spring". Only two of the 20 crewmembers survived the impact by parachuting to safety, one from each plane. Sgt. Larry Atiyeh, from "Curley's Kids" and Sgt. Robert McPherson, from "Off Spring" The other 18 crewmembers all died in the crash.

The bodies were transported to the old school of Perlé, today's actual 385th Bomb Group Memorial Museum, in order to be identified. Most of the crewmembers were identified with help of the personal items and the dog tags they wore.

The police of Perlé collected all weapons and ammunition from the wreckage and put them in safe keeping. Some bombs from the planes were defused on site by military engineers of the German army.

Since it was impossible to celebrate a requiem during the Nazi occupation of Luxembourg for the B-17 crewmembers that died, a ceremony took place in the church of Perlé after the liberation on October 17th 1944 at 18:30. Eighteen candles and eighteen helmets, one for each airman, were placed in the church to honor those crewmembers which died.



« OFF SPRING » B-17 G / 42-31917

Capt. Richard B. WHITE, PA, 26
 2nd/Lt. Patrick J. FLANAGAN, MI
 2nd/Lt. Clarence E. GITTINS, MI, 21
 F/O James W. JOHNSTON, PA, 21
 S/Sgt. Marvin W. NIEMAN, MI, 21
 S/Sgt. Harry E. FITZWATER, OK, 24
 S/Sgt. William LORD jr. OH, 27
 S/Sgt. Homer COMEGYS, IA, 26
 S/Sgt. Samuel L. CANTER, OH, 20
 S/Sgt. Robert P. McPHERSON, survived



« CURLEY'S KID'S » B-17 G / 42-102606

1st/Lt. Robert L. McDONALD, GA
 2nd/Lt. Stephen F. RYAN, PA, 22
 2nd/Lt. William T. HENRY, ME, 24
 F/O Francis M. CHRISMAN, CA, 23
 S/Sgt. Russel HALE, KY, 22
 S/Sgt. Peter J. HEFFERNAN, NY, 29
 S/Sgt. Walter R. BEROSE, PA, 24
 S/Sgt. Peter LINTON, MS, 24
 T/Sgt. George E. BROWN, IL, 21
 S/Sgt. Larry ATIYEH, NY, survived



In 1997, plans came up for a monument dedicated to the eighteen airmen. For the dedication ceremony, a small exhibition with parts of the two B-17s was set up. The museum's exhibition, first shown at the dedication ceremony only, soon grew with many interesting parts being donated to complete the collection. Personal items, material and uniforms donated by veterans of the 385th Bomb Group as well as parts from B-17s and other plane crashsites all over Luxembourg made the collection even more valuable.

The collection was installed for permanent display in the old school building of Perlé in 1999. The museum, as well as the 385th Bomb Group Memorial Museum Association was born.

Extraordinary items found their way to Perlé and these items make the actual museum collection a fascinating visit.

Today the museum is still growing and the board members work hard to keep the memory alive.

