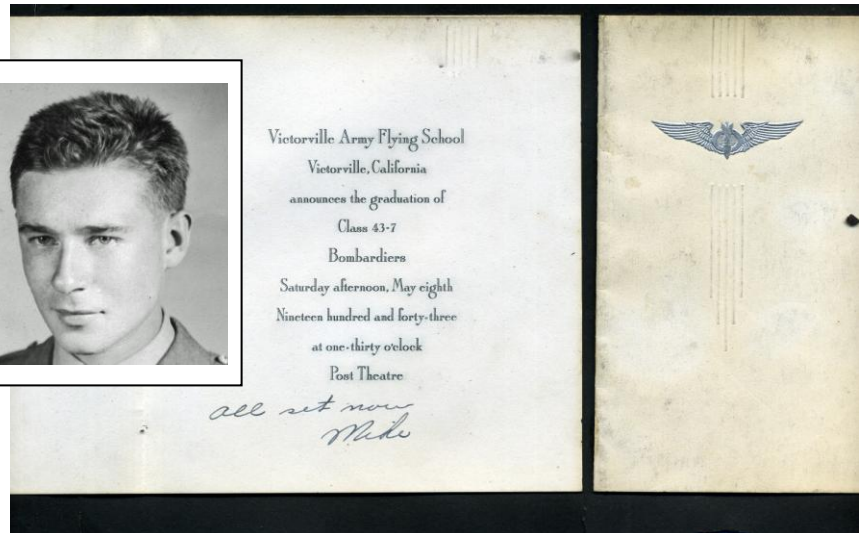
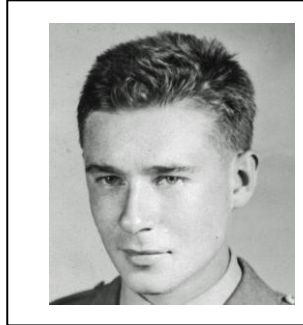


## Chapter 10 – Oh Shit! It's Mike [v3]

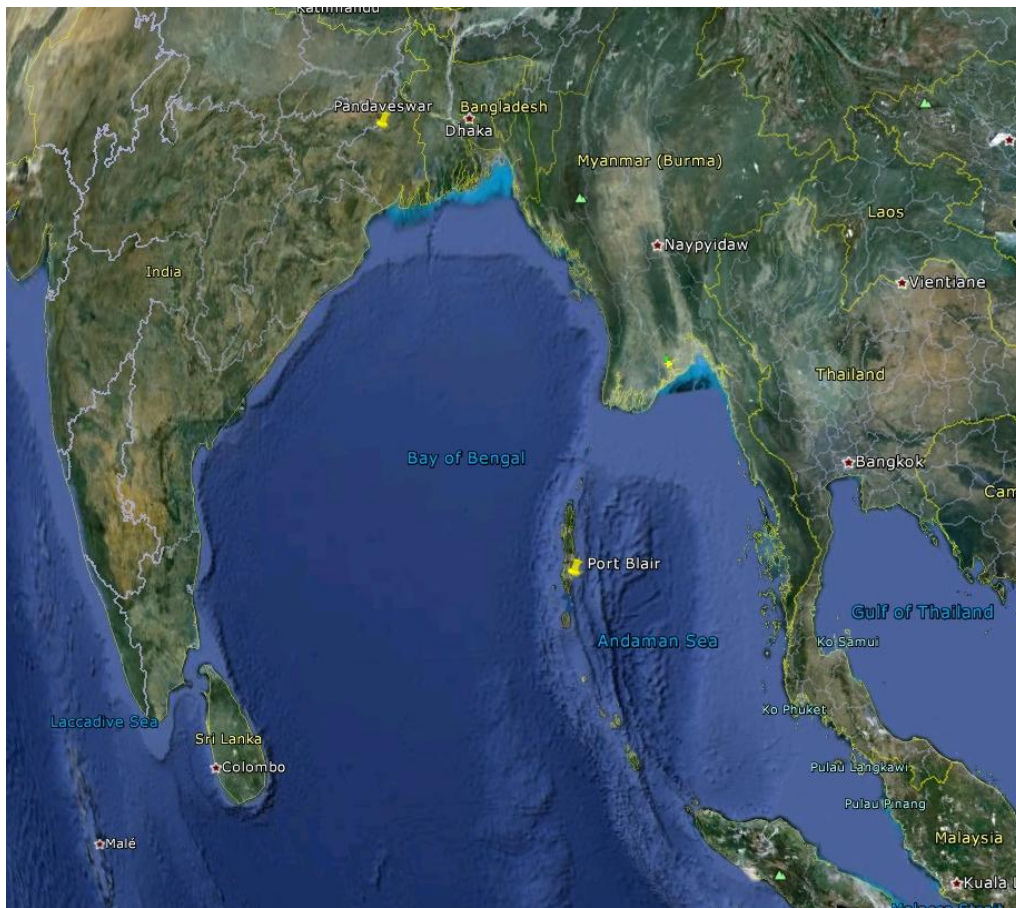
### Francis Michael (Mike) Iriarte

Mike and Gibby enlisted together in January of 1941. Gibby became an Army Air Force Cadet and graduated as a bombardier from the Victorville Flying School in February of 1943. George followed Gibby's lead and would eventually graduate from the Deming Flying School in New Mexico. Mike would closely follow George and graduated with the same specialty from Victorville on May 8, 1943.



This was one of the few photos Hazel kept of Mike and his sister in front of Grace Methodist Church in New York City. Mike is wearing his bombardier wings so this photo was taken mid-to-late 1943 before he shipped out for combat.

Mike was assigned to the Tenth Air Force as bombardier of a crew on a B-24 Liberator operating in the China-Burma-India Theatre flying missions over the Andaman Islands and other targets near Port Blair. His home base was Padaveswar Air Base in eastern India.



<b>Role</b>	Heavy bomber
<b>Manufacturer</b>	Consolidated Aircraft
<b>First flight</b>	29 December 1939
<b>Introduction</b>	1941
<b>Retired</b>	1968 Indian Air Force <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Primary users</b>	United States Army Air Forces United States Navy Royal Air Force Royal Canadian Air Force
<b>Produced</b>	1940–1945
<b>Number built</b>	18,482
<b>Unit cost</b>	\$297,627 (\$4.44 million in today's dollars) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Developed from</b>	Consolidated XB-24
<b>Variants</b>	PB4Y Privateer XB-41 C-87 Liberator Express Consolidated R2Y Consolidated Liberator I



B-24 Liberator – the “Flying Boxcar”

The **Consolidated B-24 Liberator** was an American heavy bomber, designed by Consolidated Aircraft of San Diego, California. It was known within the company as the Model 32, and a small number of early models were sold under the name **LB-30**, for Land Bomber. The B-24 was used in World War II by several Allied air forces and navies, and by every branch of the American armed forces during the war, attaining a distinguished war record with its operations in the Western European, Pacific, Mediterranean, and China-Burma-India Theaters.



Mass production was brought into full force by 1943 with the aid of the Ford Motor Company through its newly constructed Willow Run facility, where peak production had reached one B-24 per hour and 650 per month in 1944. Other factories soon followed. The B-24 ended World War II as the most produced Allied heavy bomber in history, and the most produced American military aircraft at over 18,400 units, due largely to Henry Ford and the harnessing of American industry. It still holds the distinction as the most-produced American military aircraft.

Often compared with the better-known B-17 Flying Fortress, the B-24 was a more modern design with a higher top speed, greater range, and a heavier bomb load; however, it was also more difficult to fly, with heavy control forces and poor formation-flying characteristics. Popular opinion among aircrews and general staffs tended to favor the B-17's rugged qualities above all other considerations in the European Theater. The placement of the B-24's fuel tanks throughout the upper fuselage and its lightweight construction, designed to increase range and optimize assembly line production, made the aircraft vulnerable to battle damage. The B-24 was notorious among American aircrews for its tendency to catch fire. Moreover, its high fuselage-mounted "Davis wing" also meant it was dangerous to ditch or belly land, since the fuselage tended to break apart. Nevertheless, the B-24 provided excellent service in a variety of roles thanks to its large payload and long range.

The United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) took delivery of its first B-24As in 1941. The sole B-24 in Hawaii was destroyed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Like the RAF, the USAAF used them as transports at first. American B-24s entered combat service in 1942 when on 6 June, four B-24s from Hawaii staging through Midway Island attempted an attack on Wake Island, but were unable to find it on 12 June 1942, 13 B-24s flying from Egypt attacked the Axis-controlled oil fields and refineries around Ploiesti, Romania.

Over the next three years, B-24 squadrons deployed to all theaters of the war: African, European, China-Burma-India, the Battle of the Atlantic, the Southwest Pacific Theater and the Pacific Theater. In the Pacific, the B-24 (and its twin, the U.S. Navy PB4Y Privateer) was eventually designated as the standard heavy bomber to simplify logistics and to take advantage of their longer range, replacing the shorter-range B-17 which had served early in the war along the perimeter of the Pacific from the Philippines, Australia, Espiritu Santo, Guadalcanal, Hawaii, and during the Battle of Midway from Midway Island.



Air operations in India started to build in Assam, India. The Chabua Air Base was built in 1939. During World War II it was a major supply point for the ferrying of supplies to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's forces in and around Kunming, China. This was known as "Flying the Hump".



The Japanese occupation of Burma in 1942 had cut off the Burma Road, the last land route by which the Allies could deliver aid to the Chinese Government of Chiang Kai-shek. Until the Burma Road could be retaken and the Ledo Road completed, the only supply route available was the costly and dangerous route for transport planes over the Himalayas between India's Assam Valley and Kunming, China. This route became known as the Himalayan Hump or simply The Hump.

Operated initially by the United States Army Air Forces Ferrying Command (Later Air Transport Command) China Ferrying Command (later ATC India China Wing). The 1st Ferrying (later Transport) Group operated three squadrons of C-47 Skytrain and C-46 Commando aircraft from Chabua. The airfield was also an important layover stop of the ATC Karachi-Kunming air transport route. Flights operated west to Agra Airport, Willingdon Airfield (New Delhi), Gaya Airport, Assam (Borjhar Airport) and east into Dali Airport, and Kunming (Wujiaba Airport) in China

While the route kept the transports relatively free from enemy attack (Enemy action destroyed only seven aircraft, killing 13 men) it led over rugged terrain, through violent storms, with snow and ice at the higher altitudes the planes flew over the mountains. Flying the Himalayan Hump would turn out to be some of the most dangerous flying in the world. Over the course of action there were 460 aircraft and 792 men lost. Still, the operations were a success. There were 167,285 trips that moved 740,000 tons of material to support Chinese troops and other Allied forces.

In addition to the ATC transport units, elements of the Tenth Air Force 380th Bombardment Group, 375th Bombardment Squadron operated B-24 Liberators from the airfield, flying long range bombardment missions into Burma, south China, Thailand (Bangkok) and well as French Indochina (Haiphong). A total of 8 B-24s were lost. Also the B-24s were used to ferry aircraft fuel into China.

## India Air Task Force (IATF)

As autumn of 1943 brought clearing weather to India and Burma, it was realized that the India Air Task Force, activated on 3 October, would face serious responsibilities. There were signs of Japanese preparations to move northward from Myitkyina toward Fort Hertz, and it was believed that the enemy would make a determined effort to bomb the vitally important but highly vulnerable air installations in Assam. [Fort Hertz was a remote British Military outpost in northeastern Burma in the district of Putao in what is now the Kachin State near the present town of Putao. It was named after William Axel Hertz. Hertz led the first expeditions into the far north of Burma in 1888, was responsible for the 1912 Gazetteer of Kachin Hills area and served as the first Deputy Commissioner of the Government in the Putao District. The military post was established in 1914 and given the name *Fort Hertz* in 1925 on the retirement of William Hertz from the Indian Civil Service].

Caleb V. Haynes (soon to be promoted to brigadier general) was given command of the new task force, which comprised all combat units then in India, with the dual mission of defending Assam and doing everything possible to check the enemy drive toward Fort Hertz.

On paper the IATF had nine squadrons, but not one was fully prepared for combat operations. Of the four heavy bombardment squadrons of the 7th Group, the 9th had not yet been returned from the Middle East, the 436th was just receiving its component of aircraft, and the other two, the 492d and 493d, were mere cadres. The recently activated 341st Bombardment Group (M) had only three squadrons in India, and two of them, the 490th and 491st, were without aircraft. The 22d Squadron was just receiving its planes and had not completed training. A detachment of the 26th Fighter Squadron had moved to Dinjan, but the other squadron of the 51st Fighter Group, the 25th, was in training at Karachi.

During the summer months the defense of Assam had consisted largely of monsoon weather. As the end of the rainy season neared, Haynes moved the remainder of the 26th Fighter Squadron to Assam and alerted the partially trained 25th Squadron, but before the defenses of Assam could be greatly bolstered, the long-expected Japanese assault took place. On 25 October flights of enemy bombers and fighters appeared over targets in Assam almost before warning of their approach was received. Fortunately three American fighters were already airborne and six others managed to take off, but the element of surprise made it impossible for them to throw up more than a token defense. The attack obviously was planned with full knowledge of conditions at the several fields. Dinjan, Chabua, Mohanbari, and Sookerating were all hit, but only the important airdromes at Dinjan and Chabua were heavily bombed. In all, approximately one hundred Japanese planes took part in the mission, the bombers releasing their bombs at 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet and the fighters dropping down to 100 feet to strafe. Severe damage was done to runways and buildings, but the most serious loss was in parked aircraft. Five transports and seven fighters were completely destroyed, while four transports and thirteen fighters were badly damaged. Enemy losses consisted of six fighters, two reconnaissance planes, and one bomber.

On the following day a number of enemy aircraft estimated at from thirty-two to fifty made strafing sweeps over the same area, concentrating on Sookerating. Again the interval between reception of the alarm and appearance of the attackers was too short to permit interception. On

this occasion no planes were lost on the ground, but a freight depot containing food and medical supplies intended for China was burned. Two enemy planes were destroyed by ground fire. A third raid on 28 October, thought to be largely for the purpose of reconnaissance, did little damage.

Immediately after the raids on Assam all available fighters in India were rushed there. The 26th Fighter Squadron was established at Dinjan, while the 25th Squadron arrived from Karachi on 31 October to take up its duties at Sookerating. Additional anti-aircraft batteries arrived on the day after the first raid, but ground defenses were still inadequate. Moreover, the air warning net could not be improved until more equipment arrived. Because of this tenuous situation an appeal for the return from the Middle East of all Tenth Air Force personnel and aircraft.

By the end of 1943 the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force was back in action and the B-24 heavies extended their attempted interdiction of Japanese supply lines to Burma by water approaches by beginning a series of raids on Port Blair in the Andaman Islands.

Either fearing to risk their aircraft or unable to make interceptions, the Japanese offered no aerial resistance to these heavy bomber missions. They did, however, begin a counteroffensive bombardment late in December. In the face of ineffective interception by RAF fighters, they repeatedly attacked docks and shipping at Calcutta and Chittagong and damaged airfields at Dum Dum, Alipore on the southern outskirts of Calcutta, and Fenny. As the year came to an end the exchange of bombing attacks continued with neither offensive effort meeting effective resistance.

By January 1943 headquarters of the IATF had been established at Barrackpore near Calcutta, and the following deployment of combat units was completed: the 25th and 26th Fighter Squadrons were at Sookerating and Dinjan, in Assam; the 436th and 492d Bombardment Squadrons (H) were at Gaya; the 9th and 493d Bombardment Squadrons (H) at Pandaveswar; the 22d and 491st Bombardment Squadrons (M) at Chakulia; and the 490th Bombardment Squadron (M) at Ondal. The newly activated squadrons, though not yet at full strength, were ready to participate in combat, and it appeared that for the first time the Tenth Air Force was in position to challenge Japanese air supremacy in Burma. Although deployment and training had advanced to a stage permitting combat operations, other fundamental problems had to be worked out before the IATF could hope to achieve success comparable to that of the CATF. The Tenth Air Force as a whole was a fairly well-balanced organization, with one heavy group, one medium group, and two fighter groups. Yet requirements of the task force in China, where many fighters were necessary and only a few bombers could be supported, had left a badly balanced task force in India. Responsibility for carrying out the major phase of the Tenth's mission, protection of the Hump operation, was divided between the two task forces, but enemy deployment and the geography of the theater made it inevitable that the IATF should bear the greater part of this burden.

This might have contributed to the appalling results of Mike Iriarte's last mission on April 15, 1944.

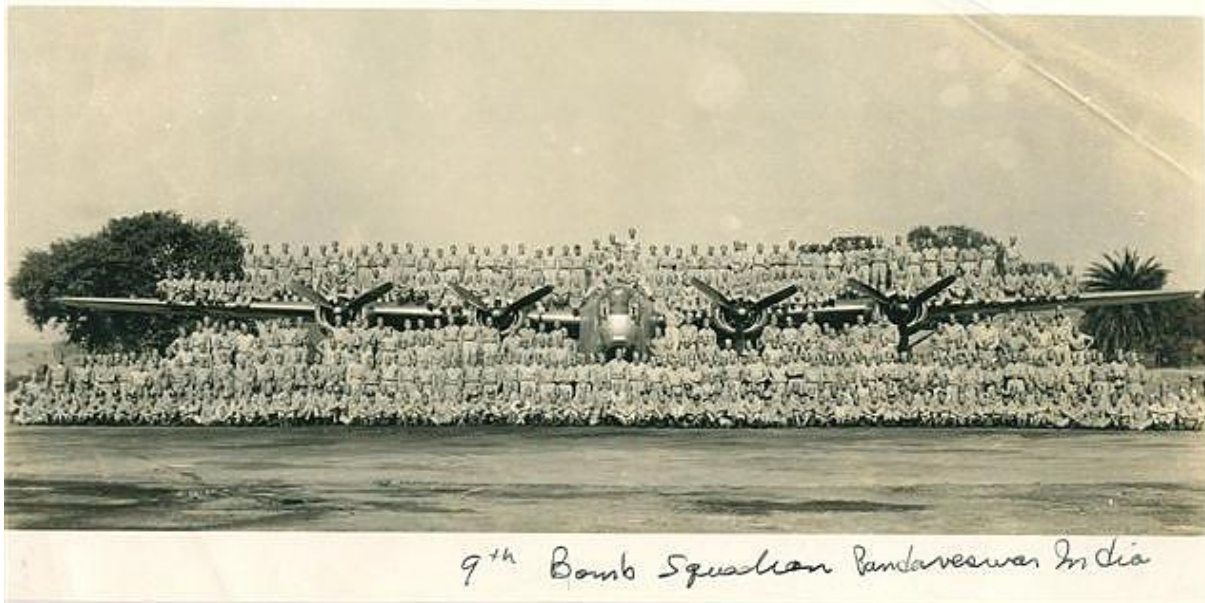
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Images of Pandasveswar – 1943





Aircraft number 42-100243 left Pandaveswar Air Base on the morning of April 15, 1944.

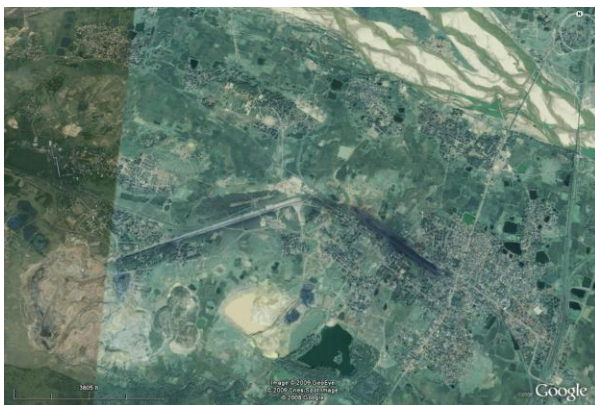


Above: The entire 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron at and on one of their B-24 Bombers. Mike is there somewhere.

Left: Pandaveswar Airfield as it appeared in 1945

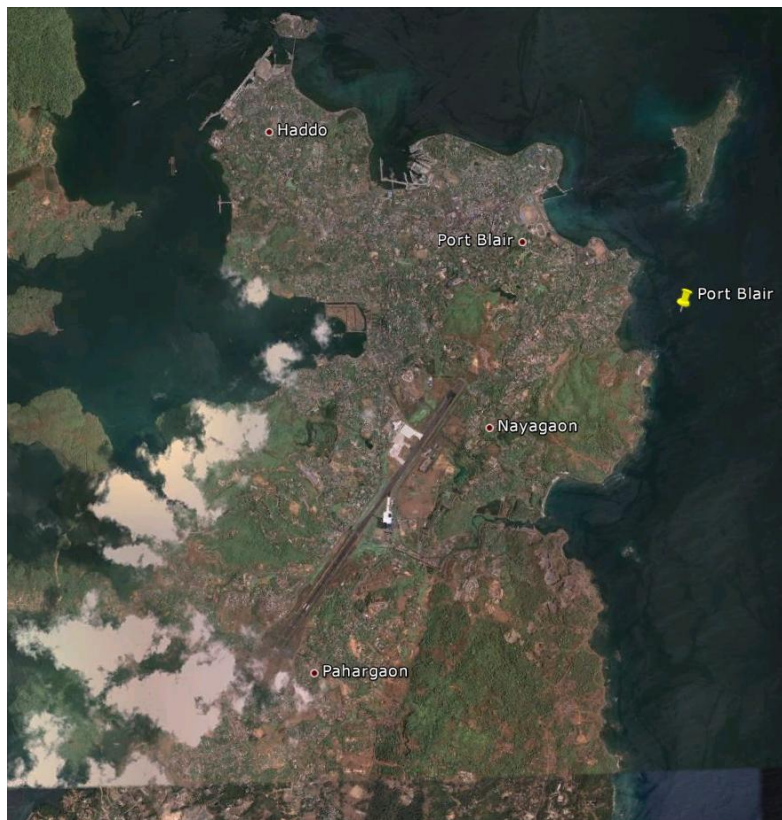
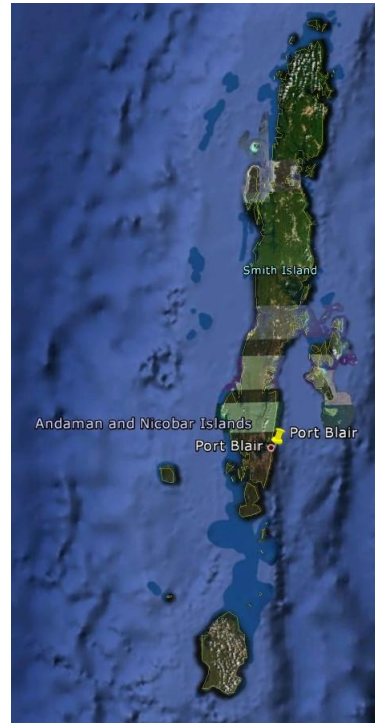
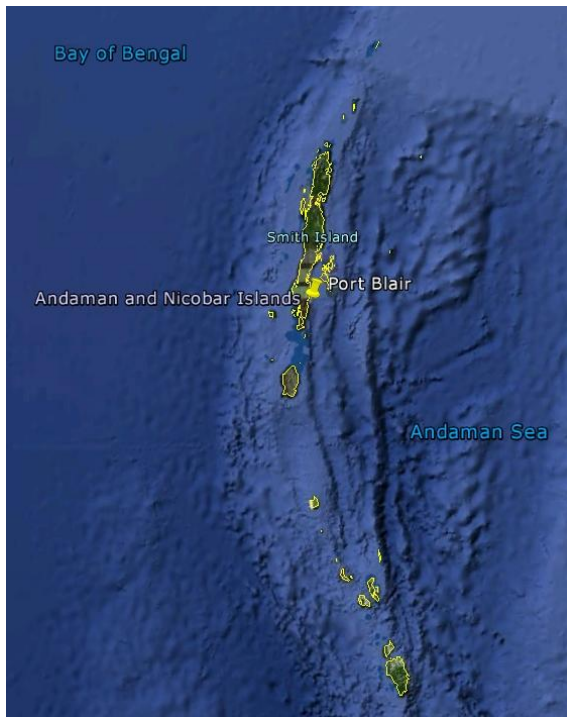
Below Right: Ground crews eagerly await the return of their aircraft (and friends)

Below Left: Pandaveswar today

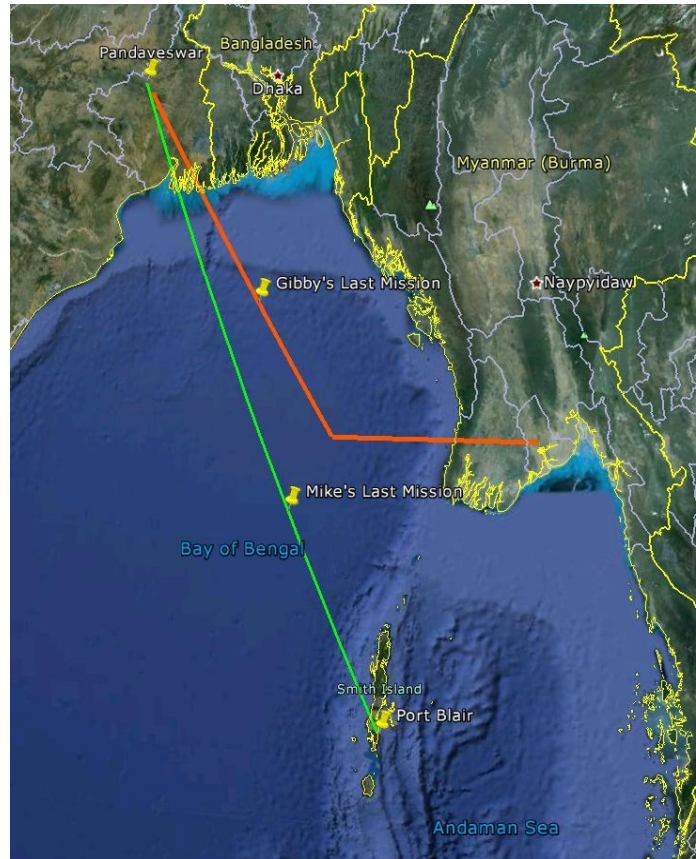
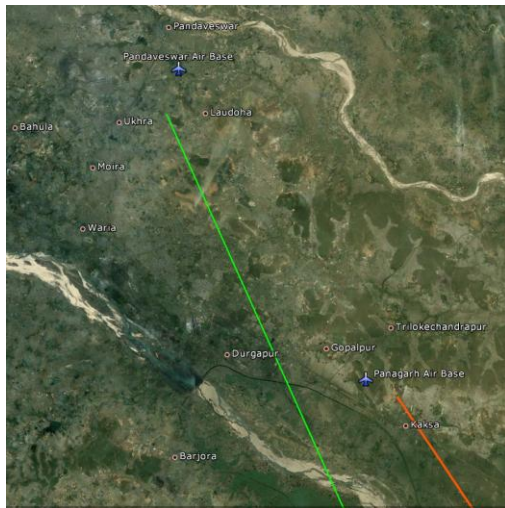




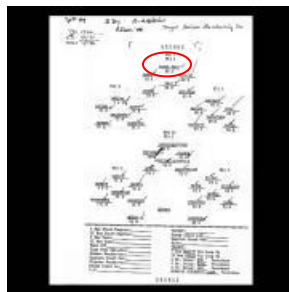
The targets were the airfield and docks at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands.



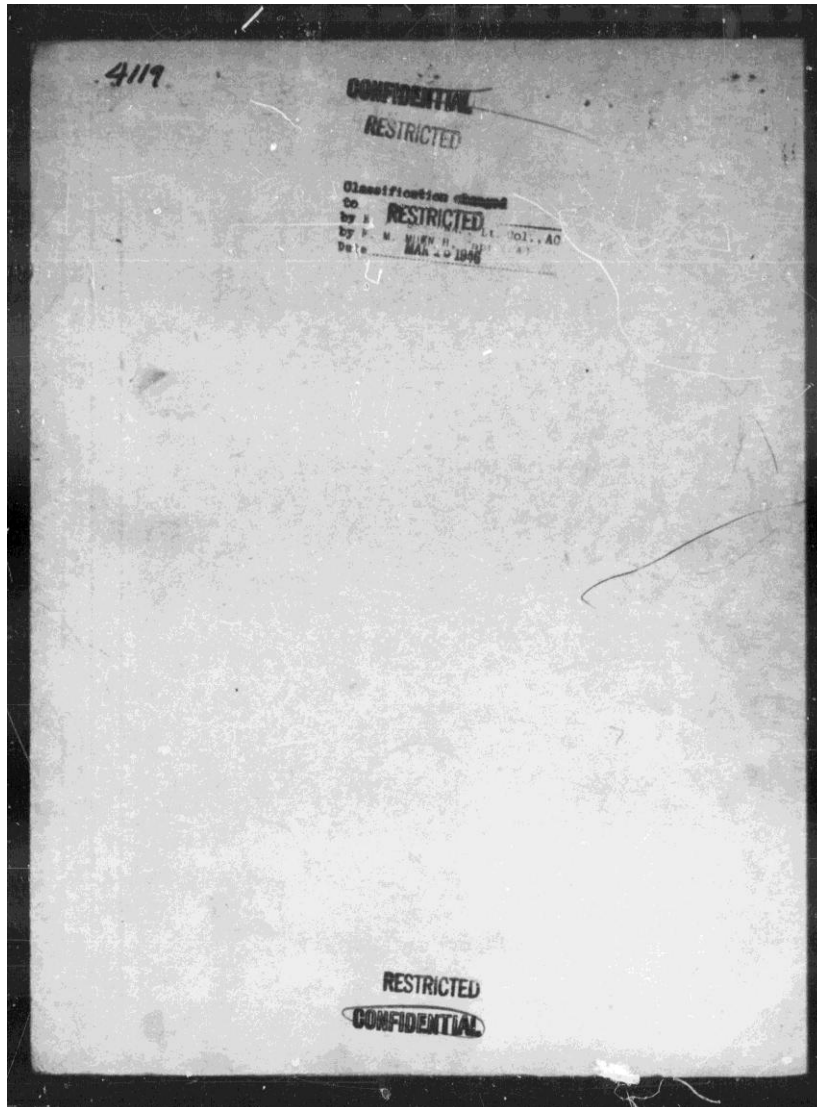
Mike might not have known it at the time but ironically once again he was closely following Gibby's path taking off from an airfield only 17 miles northwest of where Gibby began his last mission on December 1, 1943 from Panagarh. Both had an uneventful trip over the Bay of Bengal - but neither would make it home. His mother, Leonora Capote, of West 104<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, received the awful telegram from the war department in late April. Hazel and all of 104<sup>th</sup> Street surely heard about it immediately. The details, however, remained classified for years.



Mike would be flying in the lead aircraft in the traditional box formation. I remember George telling me years later that was not a good place to be as the anti-aircraft batteries on the ground always aimed for the front of the squadron. Enemy aircraft in the air also knew the lead plane in a box set the direction of the bombing run and the release point. Thus, they tried to take that one out first.



Like Rangoon, Burma at the beginning of the war, the Andaman Islands were heavily fortified by the Japanese with significant air, sea and ground forces. Mike's squadron was probably met by hostile forces some 50 to 100 miles before landfall. They would rely on their own gunners and escort fighters to protect them. Unfortunately, they would be overwhelmed as you can see from the following declassified missing aircraft as reported by an eye witnesses flying in the same formation (MACR # 4199).





A. P. O. 886  
16 April 1944

A F F I D A V I T

On the 15 April 1944 while participating on a combat mission we were attacked by enemy fighters. The first pass knocked out number two engine of our lead ship flown by Lieut. STANLEY M. ALLISON. This engine was feathered. The second pass started number one engine on fire. All passes from then on were concentrated on the crippled ship. We were flying on his right and could see that the right waist gun, the tail turret gun and the left gun on the nose turret were not firing. Lieut. Allison pulled out of the formation and was flying at approximately 300 feet. Four parachutes were seen to open, three landed in the water and the other landed in some trees on the island. Losing altitude rapidly it appeared that he was trying to make a landing in the water. Due to the loss of his two engines he could not complete his attempt and crashed into the sea about 100 yards from the shore. Upon impact with the water the ship exploded and burst into flames which died out immediately. Through the smoke we could still see the tail of the plane protruding above the water.

*Herbert B. Page*  
HERBERT B. PAGE  
ASN 34473751,  
Air Corps,  
S/Sgt. Gunner.

*Salvatore DiBello*  
SALVATORE (NMI) DiBELLO,  
ASN 11047337  
Air Corps,  
S/Sgt. Gunner.



371

1st Lt. Stanley M. Allison

Mrs. Ailine E. Ewson, (sister)  
61 East Center Street,  
Mount Gilead, Ohio.

2nd Lt. Charles Kaufman

Mrs. Mildred K. Cowan, (mother)  
16255 Cherrylawn,  
Detroit, Michigan.

371

2nd Lt. Melburn A. Doby

Miss Rose Scanton, (sunt)  
25 Central Street,  
Brattleboro, Vermont.

2nd Lt. Francis M. Iriarte

Mrs. Leonora Capote, (mother)  
140 West 104th Street,  
New York 25, New York.

371

T/Sgt. Cecil Evans, Jr.

Mrs. Eva H. Evans, (mother)  
Route # 1,  
Goodlettsville, Tennessee.

S/Sgt. Walter A. Flanc

Mrs. Mary A. Flanc, (mother)  
189-15 45th Road,  
Flushing, New York.

371

S/Sgt. John D. Casey

Mrs. Naire E. Casey, (mother)  
11 Grant Street,  
Milford, Massachusetts.

S/Sgt. John T. Hutchinson

Mrs. Beatrice Hutchinson, (mother)  
366 East 189th Street,  
Bronx, New York.

T/Sgt. Kurt W. Mueller

Mrs. Gertrude Mueller, (mother)  
4333 Dickens Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Corporal Vernon W. Grout

Mrs. Ruth P. Grout, (wife)  
Broughton, Illinois.

SCU-104-1

~~SECRET~~ 4119

~~SECRET~~  
By Authority of  
C.G. with A.F.  
236 vV  
Date Initials

DETACHMENT TWENTY SECOND STATISTICAL CONTROL UNIT  
HEADQUARTERS TENTH AIR FORCE  
U.S. ARMY

V

A.P.O. 465  
23 April 1944

SUBJECT : Transmittal of Form 129, Missing Air Crews.

TO : Commanding Officer, 22d Statistical Control Unit,  
Hq., AAF, India-Burma Sector, C-B-I Theater, A.P.O. 671.

Inclosed herewith Form 129, Missing Air Crews, for the below  
listed organization:

9th Bomb Sq. (H) AAF., (dated 15 April 1944)  
Airplane serial number. 42-100243  
Type & Model. B-24-J  
Pilot. 1st Lt. Stanley M. Allison.

*J. Ressegute*  
J. RESSEGUTE,  
Capt., A.C.,  
Detachment Commander.

1 Incl:  
Incl #1 Form 129 (with supporting papers) (in dupe)

22SCU 360.33 (23-4-44) Missing Crew Report 1st Ind. /11s  
TWENTY SECOND STATISTICAL CONTROL UNIT, Headquarters Army Air Forces,  
IB Sector, CBI Theater, APO 671. 25 April 1944

TO: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, IB Sector, CBI Theater, A.P.O. 671.

*W.R.A.*  
W. R. A.  
AAF-5-2

1 Incl:  
n/c (1 copy w/d)

AAF (IBS) 360.33 (23-4-44) Missing Crew Report 2nd Ind. AAS/11s  
HEADQUARTERS ARMY AIR FORCES, IB Sector, CBI Theater, A.P.O. 671 1 - MAY 1944

TO: Commanding General, Army Air Forces, Washington, D.C., Attn: Statistical  
Control Division.

*W.M.S.*  
W. M. S.  
OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
11 MAY 1944  
HQS WAFB

1 Incl:  
n/c

~~SECRET~~

MC-942

ACT 092-19659

HEADQUARTERS TENTH AIR FORCE  
DELHI

Classification changed  
to **RESTRICTED**  
by E. A. BRADONAS, Lt. Col., AG  
by F. M. MURPHY, Capt., AG  
Date 15/4/44

**MISSING AIRCRAFT REPORT**

IMPORTANT: This report will be compiled in triplicate, one copy each for each of the following organizations within 42 hours of the time an aircraft is reported missing.

- ORGANIZATION: Location Pandaveswar, India; Command or Air Force Tenth; Group 4788th; Squadron Ninth; Detachment \_\_\_\_\_
- SPECIFY: Point of Departure PANDAVESWAR; Course PANDA Direct to Target; Intended Destination Port Blair; Type of Mission Combat
- WEATHER CONDITIONS AND VISIBILITY AT TIME OF CRASH OR WHEN LAST REPORTED: 10-20 miles visibility, scattered clouds, slight haze
- GIVE: (a) Date 15/4/44; Time 1212 hours; and Location 92°44' E 12°55' N of last known whereabouts of missing aircraft.  
(b) Specify whether ( ) Last Sighted; ( ) Last contacted by radio; ( ) Forced Down; (X) Seen to Crash; or ( ) Information not available.
- AIRCRAFT WAS LOST, OR IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN LOST, AS A RESULT OF (Check only one): (X) Enemy Aircraft; ( ) Enemy anti-aircraft; ( ) Other Circumstances as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

AIRCRAFT: Type, Model and Series B-24J; A.M.F. Serial Number 42-100243  
ENGINES: Type, Model and Series R1830-65; A.M.F. Serial Number (a) BP 42-7681  
(b) 42-92348; (c) BP 42-7850; (d) BP 42-7828

INSTALLED WEAPONS (Furnish below Make, Type and Serial Number)  
(a) (Included on separate sheet); (c) \_\_\_\_\_; (d) \_\_\_\_\_  
(e) \_\_\_\_\_; (f) \_\_\_\_\_; (g) \_\_\_\_\_; (h) \_\_\_\_\_

- THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW WERE REPORTED AS: (a) Battle Casualty Yes  
or (b) Non-Battle Casualty \_\_\_\_\_
- NUMBER OF PERSONS ABOARD AIRCRAFT: Crew 10; Passengers 0 Total 10  
(Starting with pilot, furnish the following particulars; If more than 10 persons were aboard aircraft, list similar particulars on the reverse side of the form with notation at the bottom of the page marked "over".)

**Status**

Crew Position	Name in Full (Last Name First)	Rank	Serial Number
DE01. Pilot	Allison, Stanley M.	1st. Lieut.	0-872287
DE02. Co-Pilot	Duby, Melburn A.	2nd. Lieut.	0-806821
EUS3. Navigator	Kaufman, Charles (nmi)	2nd. Lieut.	0-683832
DE04. Bombardier	Iriarte, Francis M.	2nd. Lieut.	0-744199
DE05. Engineer	Evans, Cecil (nmi) Jr.	T/Sgt.	1413-821
DE06. Radio Ops	Mueller, Kurt W.	T/Sgt.	16146126
DE07. Arms Gunner	Cassidy, John D.	S/Sgt.	11107843
DE08. Arms Gunner	Hutchinson, John T.	S/Sgt.	32495670
DE09. Arms Gunner	Blanc, Walter A.	S/Sgt.	32693639
DE10. Arms Gunner	Grout, Vernon W.	Corp.	17001688

- IDENTIFY BELOW THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LAST KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT, AND CHECK APPROPRIATE COLUMN TO INDICATE BASIS FOR SAID: Check Only One Column

Name in Full (Last Name First)	Serial Number	Contacted by	Last Sighted	Saw Crash	Saw Forced Landing
1. DiBello, Salvatore (nmi)	S/Sgt. 11047337	Radio		X	
2. Page, Herbert B.	S/Sgt. 34473751			X	

- IF PERSONNEL ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE SURVIVED, ANSWER YES TO ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS: (a) Parachutes were used Yes; (b) Persons were seen walking away from scene of crash \_\_\_\_\_; or (c) Any other reason (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- ATTACH AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH, MAP, CHART, OR SKETCH, SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION WHERE AIRCRAFT WAS LAST SEEN.
- ATTACH EYEWITNESS DESCRIPTION OF CRASH, FORCED LANDING, OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES PERTAINING TO MISSING AIRCRAFT.
- ATTACH A DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTENT OF SEARCH, IF ANY, AND GIVE NAME, RANK AND SERIAL NUMBER OF OFFICER IN CHARGE HERE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Report 16 April 1944

David N. Kellogg  
(Signature of Proprietor)  
DAVID N. KELLOGG,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

NINTH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF  
SEVENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF  
Office of the Armament Officer

16 April 1944

SUBJECT: ARMAMENT LOST ON PLANE

TO : Operations Officer, 9th Bomb. Sq.

1. The following equipment was lost on Airplane #42-100243

Guns, Browning Machine, Cal. .50, M2, Aircraft, Ser. Nos.  
943950, 943976, 935485, 943279, 943874, 944543, 943476,  
943221, 943937, and 942743.

Guns, Thompson Sub-Machine, Cal. .45, Model 1928A1, Ser. Nos.  
S-382305, and S-376517.

Rifle, Cal. .30, Model 1903, Ser. No. 407251.

Pistols, Auto., Cal. .45, Model 1911A1, Ser. Nos. 974290,  
890205, 1077743, 1077674.

Pistols, Auto., Cal. .45, Model 1911, Ser. Nos. 200543,  
587203, 216603, 591071, 532191, and 505756.

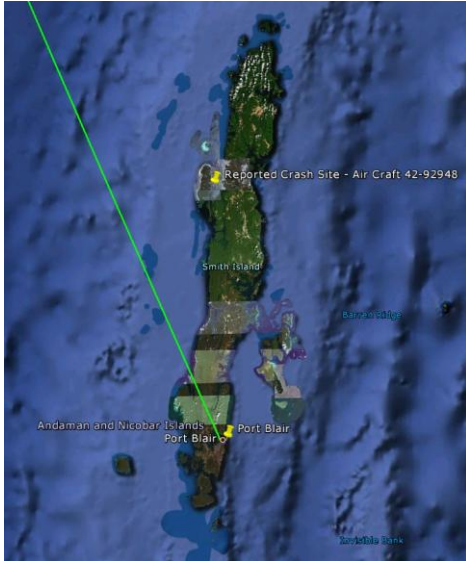
Bombsight, M-9, Ser. No. B-239.

Stabilizer, M-9, Ser. No. B-239.

*Robert L. Stell*  
ROBERT L. STELL  
Capt., Air Corps  
Armament Officer.



Apparently the targeting of Mike's lead aircraft was intentional given the number of passes the Japanese fighters made to make sure it was down. It must have happened just before the bombing run since the last reported position of the aircraft was in the water just off Interview Island west of Smith Island – still 84 miles north of Port Blair.



The area remains undeveloped jungle to this day.



While at first Mike was listed as MIA, he was not listed as officially killed in action until February of 1946. His sacrifice is remembered at an American Cemetery in the Philippines along with his entire crew – none of who were ever found (navigator Charles Kaufman is the only name not listed in the Defense Prisoner of War – Missing Personnel Office data base).

## AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

### **Francis M. Iriarte**

**Second Lieutenant, U.S. Army Air Forces**

**Service # 0-744199**

**9th Bomber Squadron, 7th Bomber Group,  
Heavy**

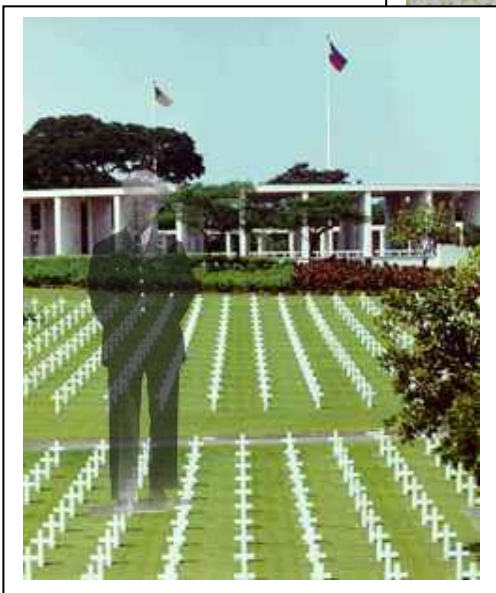
**Entered the Service from: New York**

**Died: 16-Feb-46**

**Missing in Action or Buried at Sea**

**Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery  
Manila, Philippines**

**Awards: Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, Purple  
Heart**



At the time, neither the commanders nor the families at home wanted to tell George what happened. He was next.