

# **LOST & FOUND**

## **A fifty-seven year search for answers and closure**

as told by Jim Graham, 1stFG/71stFS (1944-45)

### **PROLOGUE**

John Mullins' excellent history of the 1st Fighter Group in World War II, "AN ESCORT OF P-38's" states that there were 280 pilots lost out of 720 that passed through the Group. That number included those known to be killed, missing in action or captured as POW's.

Some were killed without doubt in clearly witnessed catastrophic terminations of flight. Others were considered likely killed when some doubt was harbored by witnesses. When last sight by witnesses indicated possible survival, the missing pilot was considered missing in action. In some cases the MIA pilots were spirited out of enemy territory by friendly forces and some returned using their own survival skills. Some were captured by the enemy and impounded as POW's.

In all cases, time hangs heavily upon those who were their comrades and upon the family and loved ones. The oppressive silence that persists after declarations of KIA's and MIA's really only ends or is broken when the lucky ones reappear--or when the remains of the unlucky ones are returned to those who loved them.

This story is about the 57 year wait for the family of 2nd Lt. William O. Wisner, 71st FS/1st FG to have the painful silence of his loss broken with definitive discovery of his earthly remains. His niece, Diana Dale, challenged that silence and was rewarded against great odds. She has written her own story of the saga with the full force and compassion that only the family of a lost hero can express. She is waiting for the final page to be written when the CILHI confirms via DNA tests that the recovered remains are those of her uncle Bill, before she declares their LOST has been FOUND.

The Internet and the genuine humanity that can be discovered through it made all this possible.

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

PROLOGUE

CHAPTER 1 -- BILL WISNER

CHAPTER 2 -- BILL'S NIECE

CHAPTER 3 -- LOOSE ENDS  
CHAPTER 4 -- WHERE FROM HERE  
CHAPTER 5 -- TALLY HO  
CHAPTER 6 -- RITTEN RESPONDS  
CHAPTER 7 -- THE SARNTAL CONNECTION  
CHAPTER 8 -- THE RITTEN RECRUIT  
CHAPTER 9 -- DIANA SOLO'S  
CHAPTER 10 -- PAOLO THE SLEUTH  
CHAPTER 11 -- INGA COMES OUT SWINGING  
CHAPTER 12 -- THE BULGARIAN TRAVELER  
CHAPTER 13 -- SORTING THE FLAK & THE CHAFF  
CHAPTER 14 -- CALL IN THE ARMY  
CHAPTER 15 -- THE TREASURE HUNT  
CHAPTER 16 -- THE REAL REWARD  
CHAPTER 17 -- CLOSURE IN ESCROW  
EPILOGUE

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 -- LT. WILLIAM O. WISNER  
FIGURE 2 -- ITALY  
FIGURE 3 -- ALTO ADIGE - SUDTIROL  
FIGURE 4 -- SARNTAL SEARCH AREA  
FIGURE 5 -- P-38 SUPERCHARGER

CHAPTER 1 -- Bill Wisner

2nd Lt. William O. Wisner, O-798778

In the middle of September 1944, Bill Wisner came to the 71st FS in Foggia with four buddies (Ed Steffani, Paul Summer, Lowell Twedt & Bill Ward) with whom he had gone through flight training. Bill

**began getting missions in mid October and on October 20,1944 he set out on his 10th mission—this time as Red 2 on a B-17 escort mission to Regensburg, Germany. The 27th FS was Group lead and the rendezvous was to be at Innsbruck, Austria. PETDOG (27th) was flanked high & right by CRAGMORE (71st) and by SPRINGCAP (94th) low & left. Their route took them a few miles east of Bolzano, Italy as they crossed the entrance to the Brenner Pass—'flak alley'. At 11:20AM intense accurate flak was encountered about 5 miles NE of Bolzano.**

**Almost simultaneously, Cragmore Red leader, Lt. Virgil Olson and Red 3, Capt. Joseph Elliott were hit by flak in their right engines. At that moment, White flight was crossing toward the right, just under Red flight. As Red leader veered downward due to the damage, his wingman on his left, Red 2, Lt. Bill Wisner also veered with him. Red leader Olson collided with Lt. Lowell Twedt who was flying White 4 and crossing underneath. The collision was essentially broadside and explosions followed. The resulting debris fell on Red 2, Lt. Bill Wisner. Capt. Elliott was escorted to a safe landing at Ancona. Cragmore discontinued its mission and returned to base. Petdog and Springcap proceeded on to rendezvous with the B-17's of the 5th Wing.**

**Following the mission, Lt. Jack Anderson wrote his eye witness account:**

On the 20th of October, 1944, I was flying with a squadron of fifteen (15) airplanes on an escort mission to a target at Regensburg, Germany. The Red Flight I was in consisted of Lt. Olson, flying number one position, Lt. Wisner in number two, Capt. Elliott, element leader was number three and I was flying number four.

We had penetrated as far as Bolzano, Italy, when we first encountered flak. Evasive action was taken, and no one was hit. We continued on around the east side of town and more flak was encountered from the N/E of Bolzano. Lt. Olson and Capt. Elliott were hit almost simultaneously in the right engine. They both feathered their flak hit engines and continued flight on single-engine.

Lt. Olson immediately started losing altitude and I throttled back to stay with the flight. A few seconds later, I heard someone call, "Go down, go down" on the radio. No flight designation was given in this exclamation so I started looking around to see what was happening.

Before I could determine the reason, Lt. Twedt, who was flying number four position in White Flight, came in from slightly low and from the left, and collided almost broadside with Lt. Olson. The two aircraft exploded and disintegrated into many pieces. I pulled up sharply to avoid the accident.

Upon recovering from the pull-up, I looked back and saw several pieces falling in flames. One of the larger pieces, which I took to be the remains of Lt. Twedt's airplane, appeared to have the cockpit still intact. However, I did not see the man get out and use his parachute. I did not see the two aircraft hit the ground but I do not believe either pilot survived the accident.

Several seconds later, I discovered another airplane going down in a stable attitude, but with the right engine smoking and in flames. I flew closer and saw the nose and right engine were badly smashed. I assumed that this was Lt. Wisner's aircraft because the damage looked as though it had been caused by falling debris and not from actual collision with another airplane.

The cockpit seemed undamaged, and still closed, so I called on the radio and told the pilot to bail out. I received no answer, and the plane then went into a steep dive, followed by a spin. I lost sight of the airplane very close to the ground and did not see it crash. I did not see a parachute come from the airplane.

I do not understand why Lt. Twedt did not see Lt. Olson's aircraft in time to avoid it, but there is a possibility that he was wounded by the flak and was unable to control his airplane.

Although there is a slight possibility that one or more of these pilots could have gotten clear of the wreckage and parachuted to safety unseen by me, it is my belief that this did not happen.

(Signed) Lt. Jack C. Anderson

**All three pilots---Olson, Wisner & Twedt were assumed to have been killed in action.**

**\* See Figure 1 -- Lt. William O. Wisner**

**\* See Figure 2 -- Map of Italy**

## CHAPTER 2 -- Bill's Niece

### Mrs. Diana Dale, Denver, CO

In **1994** as the 50th anniversary of Lt. Bill Wisner's crash and disappearance approached, Diana was poking through a family trunk where memorabilia about her Uncle Bill Wisner were stored. There had never been any clear resolution of his fate and Diana was acutely aware of the pain her grandmother and mother, Maxine had endured through the years. She resolved to help heal that pain by investigating the circumstances of Uncle Bill's untimely death.

Diana read and re-read letters and reports her grandmother had received from Bill and the Army. With the knowledge that he had been in the 1st FG/71st FS, she found that a reunion of the 1st Ftr. Group Association was to be held in Colorado Springs that fall. She, accompanied by her parents attended the reunion and talked with John Mullins, then the President of the Association. John was able to provide her with copies of the October 20, 1944 mission reports. He also flew that mission as a flight leader in the 94th , but had not witnessed the accident. Diana found that Sid Howell, (71st), who was at the reunion, knew of Bill Wisner, and had flown several missions with him, but knew very little about him. From John Mullins, she found that her Uncle Bill's name was on the memorial wall at the American military cemetery in Florence, Italy. Diana was somewhat disheartened that no one she encountered at Colorado Springs was acquainted with her uncle, but she was determined to continue the search for the facts of his loss.

The Internet was beginning to blossom as a new source of data and a new means of communication. Diana worked for a Denver newspaper and became involved with computers and the Internet. On **May 1, 1998**, she posted a message on the 'wae.com' bulletin board, a broad based site allowing various categories of messages to be exchanged. Diana's message on the 'military' category bulletin board was:

"Looking for anyone who might have known my uncle, Lt. William O. Wisner, who flew P-38's out of Foggia starting 9/14/44. He flew 10 missions (Budapest, Munich, Athens, Vienna, Blackheimer(sic), Brussels(sic), Regensburg). Was

MIA over Bolzano on return from Regensburg on 10/20/44. I know he was short-lived over there, but would love to hear from anyone who knew him or remembered how he went down. His mother was never able to resolve his loss due to incomplete info on his disappearance. Thanks."

On May 3, a John Hadfield posted a short reply referring Diana to Robin Hansen as a contact for the 1st Fighter Group and wishing her good luck in her search. Having attended the 1944 reunion of the 1st in Colorado, Diana awaited other inputs. There was no further response until over 9 months later when Steve Duncan, (71st ), happened on her message. Steve had been aware of search activity that had been in progress for several months related to Carl Hoenshell, (71st ) and knew that Jim Graham, (71st ), author of this article, had been involved in that search and was doing research on the history of the Group & his squadron. On Feb. 15, 1999, Duncan emailed Diana via the 'wae.com' channel and acknowledged that his response was rather belated, but advised her to contact Jim Graham and then followed up with an email to Graham to alert him to the referral. (Graham flew with the 71st FS as did Bill Wisner, but Bill joined the squadron just 3 months prior to Graham and was lost the week before his arrival.) The following day, Diana emailed Jim and introduced herself and her quest with a modest plea for help---

"I'm sure I have all the information available to date about his disappearance, including a copy of the mission report, however I'd appreciate your keeping my name and email address, in case you run across something new. I understand they're still finding wreckage in remote parts of Europe, so you never know....."

Jim's research at the U.S. National Archives had provided him with copies of all of the mission reports for the 1st Fighter Group and for the 71st Squadron as well as the Missing Air Crew Reports for 1st FG pilots lost. Diana's quest for her uncle's fate sparked a new vein of interest for Jim and , in particular, the unique case of three in the 71st being lost in the single incident compelled him to comb his data concerning that October 20 mission. He responded to Diana immediately giving her a brief summary of the efforts in the Carl Hoenshell case which seemed to be progressing toward some definitive results, and giving her encouragement that sources and contacts similar to those employed in the Hoenshell case might produce information that she sought regarding her uncle, Bill Wisner. Jim assured her that he would keep her quest and her name and address in mind-- 'on the chance we come up with any more information'.

On **March 2,1999** Jim advised Diana to obtain her uncle's Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) from the Army's mortuary affairs offices in Arlington, VA. That file would contain the complete set of correspondence and records concerning the deceased military person subsequent to the event of his disappearance or death and through the final termination of government's dealings with the relatives of the subject. The equivalent file for Hoenshell had been helpful in that search.

### CHAPTER 3 -- LOOSE ENDS

**Some six weeks later, Diana , having received and reviewed the IDPF, wrote the following email to Steve Duncan and Jim Graham:**

**April 23, 1999**

Dear Jim and Steve,

You both have been so helpful in putting me on the right path to find anything about my uncle KIA in Italy, I thought you might like to know what has happened since we last corresponded.

Jim, I wrote the agency you recommended, and yesterday I received a packet of information. Much like the pilot you researched, there was a search conducted in the Bolzano area after the war (I can't determine exactly when from the documentation -- sometime before August 1947. No remains were recovered, but the report goes on to say, "all American deceased (14 in all) that were recovered from any aircraft that crashed in the area during the course of the war had been interred at the local civilian cemeteries and at a later date removed to an established US military cemetery by American AGRS personnel." It goes on to say they were interred at the US Military Cemetery, Mirandola, as "Unknown American Soldiers."

A later document from the Memorial Division dated December 1952 mentions my uncle and the other pilot who went down on 20 Oct 1944, remains of whom had subsequently been approved "Non Recoverable. Fragmentary remains" and could not be definitely associated with my uncle, were assigned a CIL designation, changed from Unknown X-70035 (Griesheim/Main Mausoleum). I don't know what a CIL designation is, but they did assign the remains a number on 15 Dec 1952.

This is where it gets interesting: The Memorial Division also forwarded to the Army Effects Agency in Kansas City my uncle's identification bracelet to be "held by you without disposition until further notice from this office."

Then on 10 Aug 1954 the bracelet was requested to be returned to the Quartermaster General, requesting that it be retained with the case file for Unknown CIL-5034 "until the case is resolved."

That's the last we see of it.

But what's most distressing is -- that's the first we've heard of it. You'd think if his ID bracelet was discovered with some remains, they'd have a pretty good idea it was him and at least notify his mother of the discovery. There is a question posed in the file by a clerk who asked if any record reveals if he was married, so at least someone was thinking about the possibility of letting someone know. My grandmother didn't pass away until 1976. She certainly deserved more than the unresolved "missing - presumed dead" status that they left her with. Ironically, a letter to her dated 29 August 1949 ended with, "I wish to assure you that, should any additional evidence come to our attention indicating that his remains are in our possession, you will be informed immediately."

I wrote a letter today to the Personnel Records Center in St. Louis requesting copies of their records. I'm not too optimistic about the results I'll get, because I understand there was a fire there in 1973, and many of the records were lost. I'm not sure what to do next, but I would like to pursue at least getting his ID bracelet back and finding out where the remains of CIL-5034 are. I know it would mean a lot to my mother to know that perhaps parts of him are resting in an actual grave. Having his name inscribed on the Wall of the Missing is nice, but it's not closure.

I guess my next trip to Italy will include a visit to the American Cemetery in Mirandola.

Steve, I wrote Myron Hutchins, the 1st FG alum you tracked to Colorado Springs who was the squadron leader on Bill's last mission, but it's been

two months and I haven't gotten a response. I don't expect he can help much with details of the crash, but a personal memory would be nice.

Anyway, thank you both again for all your help. I wouldn't have known where to begin, and you've put me on the right track.

Best regards,

Diana Dale

---

**There were certainly lots of loose ends left open by the 'final' document on Bill Wisner. Diana deserved better than to be left hanging on those loose ends. It was time to bring in some of the team that had tracked down the likely site of Carl Hoenshell's crash. One very helpful and influential volunteer on that team was Bill Jordan, a former high ranking official in the CILHI (Central Identification Laboratory-Hawaiian Islands). Bill had directed that team toward the proper agency in Europe that would be responsible for doing any official excavation or exhumation of remains should a specific crash site be identified. Jim forwarded Diana's message to Bill requesting him to advise Diana how she should contact CIL concerning the whereabouts of her uncle's identification bracelet.**

**April 24, 1999**

Dear Bill--

Last year about this time, you were in contact with Dick Kahler and assisted in the search effort for the crash site of Carl Hoenshell. I understand from one of your messages to Dick that you were with the CIL during the early '90's.

I have recently tried to aid Ms. Diana Dale in finding information about her uncle who went down in Italy. Could you possibly give her a lead on how to contact the CIL concerning the whereabouts of the identification bracelet mentioned in her message that I have enclosed below?

We would appreciate your help. Thanks

Jim Graham

---

**The message was also copied to Dick Kahler, the California executive who was 'the point man' of the Hoenshell search team. That was just enough bait to get Kahler hooked once more for another lost airman mystery.**

**April 24, 1999**

Jim,

I assume that Wisner is the pilots name. What outfit was he with? the 71st? What was his date and mission? What can I do to help?

Dick

---

**Jordan responded promptly the next day giving names and phone numbers of top level individuals and agencies that could help unravel some of the loose ends related to the post-war handling of Lt. Bill**

**Wisner's deceased personnel files. Diana thanked Jordan and emailed that she would proceed to make those contacts immediately---**

".... even though it's probably searching for the needle in a haystack, but there are some very nice people helping me."

#### **CHAPTER 4 -- WHERE FROM HERE?**

**Some months passed and Graham had been actively engaged in the search for Hoenshell's crash site. Upon hearing the news of its successful location on a farm in Bulgaria, Jim's memory was jogged regarding Diana Dale's search for her uncle. He emailed a short query to Diana asking if she had been successful in extracting any information from CIL as to where the ID bracelet was. He told her that since last contacting her in April, that the search for Carl Hoenshell's crash site in Bulgaria had been very successful in that the U.S. Army mortuary affairs team had actually found Hoenshell's ID bracelet when they excavated the site. There are some successes!**

**Intuition plays a prominent role in these searches for aircraft lost & forgotten for decades. Jim's query to Diana was very timely. The next day Diana responded that 'ESP lives!' She had just realized that it had been six months since she had queried CIL about the bracelet and her uncle's remains and had just sent off another letter to the CIL Director asking for an update. She had also been pondering the mystery of how & why her uncle's fragmentary remains & bracelet had been deposited at the Greisheim mausoleum as stated in the Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF). Where was Greisheim? Would they have any records on him?**

**Jim had been corresponding with a young German air war researcher, Roland Geiger, whom he believed might shed some light on the subject. He informed Diana and let Roland know of the Wisner trail through Greisheim.**

**December 8, 1999**

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your follow-up.

The ID bracelet is somewhere back here in the U.S. military system, but I don't know where yet. It was mentioned in conjunction with remains assumed to be my uncle's that were interred in an unknown crypt or grave at the Griesheim mausoleum. I'm assuming that because of the ID bracelet, they re-designated the remains from an UNK number to a CIL number, and I'm pretty sure they moved them at that time. I'm less concerned about the bracelet than I am about the current whereabouts of the remains. In 1948 they couldn't positively identify them, but with today's DNA technology they can, and that's what I'm after.

I'll contact your friend Roland directly tomorrow with the exact information in the IDPF file that points to Griesheim. Perhaps he can find out why Griesheim is even mentioned (my uncle was supposed to have gone down over Bolzano), and where the remains were relocated.

I finally got a response to my six-month follow-up letter to CIL, but it

said merely that nothing further has been ascertained, so far.

I'll keep you posted if I learn anything.

Thanks, Diana

---

**The relative vacuum forthcoming from CIL was broken the next week.**

**December 14,1999**

Jim, you're going to get so tired of hearing from me, but I got home last night to find a letter from Johnie Webb at CIL. Here's what it said:

"This is an update to our letter of November 8, 1999, concerning your uncle, Second Lieutenant William O. Wisner, SN: 0-708778. We have received and reviewed the Individual Deceased (293) File for Unknowns buried in the Griesheim Main Mausoleum (numbers from X#70000 - 70099). Within this file are Quartermaster Corps (QMC) Form 357s "Reclassification Sheet" indicating unknown remains that were later identified. For the remains designated as Unknown X-70035, there was no positive identification. The 'New Classification' was given as '293 Unk. Griesheim Maus Cil 5034'. A copy of this form is enclosed.

"We did receive a reply to our request for the CIL 5034 file from the Washington National Records Center (WNRC) in Suitland, Maryland. Unfortunately the CIL 5034 file is 'missing'. Without this file to review, we are unable to answer the questions in your letter of April 27, 1999, concerning the location of the remains designated Unknown X-70035, then later assigned CIL 5034, or the final disposition of the bracelet.

"Unless the CIL 5034 file can be reviewed, we are unable to provide you with factual data on the information you seek. If additional information is received concerning your questions, we will notify you..."

Jim, where do I go from here? Is there a next step I can take? Anyone who knows me knows I don't give up easily, and to have come this close to finding anything that might be associated with Bill makes me even more determined. It's so much more than his family ever knew existed. The form 357 is completely useless and tells me nothing I didn't already know.

What causes a file to be "missing"? Does this mean there are no other avenues I can pursue?

I'm hoping that the IDPF on the other pilot who went down with Bill will shed some light, but the chances of that are remote at best. But right now, it's all I've got to go on. I doubt if Roland will turn up anything more. It feels like such a dead end, and I'm so depressed about it, I don't quite know what to do.

Of all the possible outcomes, this is the last one I expected. I keep seeing the closing scene in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," where the Ark of the Covenant is packed in a crate and wheeled into a U.S. Government warehouse

containing hundreds of thousands of crates exactly the same size and shape... I'm sure Bill's "missing" file is in a warehouse somewhere -- misplaced, but somewhere.

Thanks, Jim, for listening, and again for all your help and support.

Diana  
-----

## **CHAPTER 5 -- TALLY-HO!**

**On December 23, 1999 Dick Kahler discovered Diana's message from May 1998 that was still posted on the 'wae.com' bulletin board and queried Jim as to her progress. Jim filled him in on the correspondence to date and her frustration with the questions that had arisen from the files received from the government. It didn't take long for the 'tiger' to come alive. He was back online the day after Christmas.**

**December 26, 1999**

Jim--

Tis the day after Christmas and the thoughts of "Uncle Bill" started thru my mind. Let me get some facts in my head. Like Carl the crash site was never found? He went down over Bolzano which I assume is in Northern Italy. Has this story been put in the 1st Fighter News? Who was his wingman? Has anyone in Bolzano been contacted? There are 5 listing in Bolzano for AOL 4 in English 1 in German. We found Bill this way. did anyone check Florence-American Cemetery? It seems that would have been the logical place to take him. Do you have the mission report as to who else was on the mission

that may have reported something, other then the 71st? Has she been in contact with Ted Darcy at wreck1@cntn.net? He will cost a few bucks but this one looks tough and we will need all the help we can get.

OK, I am hooked, it looks like a project for the coming year. Mail me what you have ... or email me what ever else you have. Happy New Year

Dick  
-----

**Jim also let Kahler know that if Diana gave the go-ahead, he was ready to shovel to him the past correspondence with Diana to bring him up to speed on the project.**

**December 26, 1999**

Hi Diana--

In my last message to you, I told you of a message I had received from Dick Kahler, who saw an old entry of yours on the WAE bulletin board.

[ .....]

Dick was a driving force on a couple of searches I've been on, including the one for Carl Hoenshell whose ID bracelet was recently found in

Bulgaria.

[.....]

I responded to him by forwarding your last message to me re 'Uncle Bill'. Since the recent find in Bulgaria, Dick has not been active in searching any lost fliers, but your bit on 'Uncle Bill' has ignited his itch to get back into the hunt. He is a banker in San Leandro, CA and .....is about to retire in the spring, so his energies are about to be unleashed.

If you are willing to have him jump into the hunt, say the word & I will send him past messages between you & I to bring him up to speed.

[.....]

Hope to hear from you. Tally-ho!

Jim

-----  
**It didn't take long for Diana to jump in with both feet-----**

**December 27, 1999**

Dear Jim,

What a great Christmas present, to get back on line after my days off and find your messages waiting for me!

Of course you have my permission to pass any information along that you think will help. If it hadn't been for the Internet and the interest of people like you, I wouldn't have known how to get this far.  
Thankyouthankyouthankyou! .....

Just let me know if you need any more information to get this search going. I can cite chapter and verse on when and where he "went down," but there are gaps in the file between the time he was declared dead, a year later (10/45) and 1948, when the review board declared him non-recoverable. I'd like to know what happened in the interim.

To answer a couple of Dick's questions, he is memorialized on the Wall of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery (I visited there June 1998). And I have been in touch with Ted Darcy, but he asked for the IDPF on Lowell Twedt, who went down in the same crash. I'm waiting for that to be sent to me before I can proceed with him. ....

I'm trying to contain my excitement, but it's very hard. Wish I didn't have to work for a living so I could do more of this kind of research and perhaps help someone else like you've helped me.

Are you sure you don't mind being the funnel through which all info flows? I like having you involved because your connections and experience are so valuable. But if you need to get on with your life, I certainly understand. Thank you so very much.

Diana

---

**The hunt was on! Kahler & Graham got busy on the Internet to scour for contacts in Italy that might lead the team to any local information that might exist about the crashes of three P-38's in the Bolzano area over 55 years ago.**

**December 27, 1999**

To: GenWebTL@aol.com  
Subject: Bolzano, Italy

Can you help us find information on a W.W.II p-38 pilot who went down north of town on 10-20-1944? His name was William Wisner and his aircraft and remains were never found. Perhaps a site has been found and never identified. Do you know of any such finds? Do you know of anyone there that could help?

Dick Kahler  
San Leandro, CA

---

**January 01, 2000**

To: tourism@provincia.bz.it  
Subject: World War II history of Bolzano region

We are seeking the Email addresses of individuals or organizations who might know of U.S. aircraft crashes within a 25 KM radius of Bolzano during October 1944. We would appreciate at least one contact within the area who would be willing to exchange information on the subject with us.

We are a group of individuals aiding the relative of a P-38 pilot named William O. Wisner whose airplane crashed about 10 KM northwest of Bolzano on 20 October 1944.

Jim Graham, Seattle, WA USA

---

**GenWebTL came back quickly with the recommendation to contact the local newspaper. ...."If I were you, I'd send an e-mail to the Trentino Alto-Adige online newspaper asking for their help. They just might pick up on a human interest story - and this certainly is a human interest story. " They also suggested contacting the provincial military.**

**January 02, 2000**

To: altoadi@tin.it  
Subject: I need help from Bolzano

On October 20, 1944, a P-38 piloted by 2nd Lt. William Wisner crashed about

15 KM northwest of Bolzano. His aircraft nor his remains were ever found. Was your newspaper in operation then? Do you have any information about this event? Is there a local W.W.II historical society there? Can you offer any advise for our assistance? I am attaching a fact sheet to give you the

information we have. With the help of people in Bulgaria we were able to find the remains of a pilot who was killed in action 6-10-44. This resulted in closure for the family.

We are a group of people that work for free to help others. Would you consider some type of story in your paper?

Dick Kahler  
San Leandro, CA

---

**After a few days of emailing and writing to various tourist, news & government agencies, there were several responses asking for further information and some that expressed regrets that they could not help. Kahler sent Diana a message of encouragement:**

**January 9, 2000**

Diana--

The hooks are in the water now and it is a matter of time till we get a bite. With your letters out, Jim's letters out and about 6 or 8 people that responded by email it is a matter of time until someone takes the time to look for information. Waiting is the most difficult thing we have to do. You are probably like me, patience is not a virtue of mine. We will wait a couple of days and if we don't get a bite we will look around to put more hooks out.

Dick

---

#### **CHAPTER 6 -- RITTEN RESPONDS**

**On January 12, 2000 the team got its first real bite. Paolo Cagnan, investigative reporter for the Bolzano newspaper, Alto Adige, answered Kahler's plea for help and asked for more information. Kahler referred him directly to Diana and a lively exchange began. Also, the Bolzano tourism office passed along Graham's email to the Ritten tourist agency located in the plateau just northeast of Bolzano. That cooperative action proved to be a very fortuitous event. A major break!**

**The Ritten tourist office responded with the following message:**

**January 15, 2000**

Subject: AW: World War II history of Bolzano region

Dear Mr. Graham

I've received your message and I can inform you that I've found lots of details about the crash of the US P-38.

The exact location of the crash is called Gebrack (a few hundred yards near to my house!!) - the exact place is called Riggermoos near the Hotel Kematen in Ritten.

(Tel of the Hotel 0039 0471 356356) or visit [www.ritten.com](http://www.ritten.com)

I've found some subjects - in the year 1944 young boys.

The name of these persons are:

Dr. Bruno Hosp - today the regional culture dept. and he lives just in front of the incident place. He was 6 years old and he remembers a dead man with a parachute other victims were scattered around the aircraft. ....

Another person - he was a little bit older is Mr. Hans Frotscher - living in Riggermoos and he knows exactly the place where the bomber crashed down.

These boys were one of the first persons they saw the crashed aircraft.

If I could help you - please inform me - I'm very interested 'bout this fact.

Tourist Office Ritten

Peter Righi  
director

-----

**A series of ecstatic messages ensued. The team was anxious to contact the witnesses, but questions of protocol and language had to be worked out. The inference in the message that there were several victims 'scattered around the aircraft' was bothersome, but would be cleared up if messages could be exchanged with the witnesses. Jim immediately responded.**

**\* SEE FIGURE 3 FOR OVERVIEW OF THE BOLZANO - SUDTIROL REGION**

**January 15, 2000**

Dear Mr. Righi,

You can't imagine how excited we are to receive your response! We are very pleased that you offer to assist us in knowing more about the circumstances of the crash that was witnessed. Is it possible that you could speak with Dr. Bruno Hosp and Mr. Hans Frotscher to determine if they would be willing to correspond or talk to Ms. Diana Dale, the niece of the lost pilot that is the subject of our search? We would be very interested to know if there might be any written records, photos of the crash site or victim and if there were items recovered from the crash or personal effects of the pilot. We are very interested, also, if there is any information about where the pilot's remains were taken.

I am sure you can understand the great interest Ms Dale has about the incident. She is trying to bring a sense of closure to her 80 year old mother who has sought information about the loss for over 55 years.

We gratefully thank you for your response and efforts. We will be in contact with you again as soon as Ms Dale is informed.

Sincerely,  
Jim Graham

---

**The search team exchanged a rapid series of email messages discussing the new contact and the possibility that it might just be another false lead considering the report of multiple crash victims. In case that the aircraft which crashed in the Ritten area was a bomber instead of a P-38, the index of Missing Air Crew Reports was checked for bombers that were lost on October 20, 1944. There were four, including one B-17, two B-24's and one B-25. The MACR's were requested from the National Archives.**

**Another consideration was language. Since the reporter, Paolo Cagnan, was fluent in English, he was considered as a possible contact to query the two men in Ritten who had witnessed the crash. On the other hand, Paolo had informed the team in his early messages that the population of the area northeast of Bolzano was mostly German-speaking and the team was reluctant to expose the gentlemen to the publicity that might follow. Jim sent the following message to Mr. Righi, the Ritten tourism director.**

-----Ursprungliche Nachricht-----

Von: Jim Graham [SMTP:jnmig@email.msn.com]  
Gesendet am: Dienstag, 18. Januar 2000 03:08  
An: T.V. RITTEN  
Cc: Stephen W Duncan; Dick Kahler; Dale, Diana  
Betreff: Re: World War II history of Bolzano region

Attention Mr. Peter Righi--

Dear Mr. Righi,

Ms Diana Dale has received a forwarded copy of your message of last Saturday and is very interested in contacting the two gentlemen who witnessed the crash you described. Do either or both of the gentlemen speak or write English? If not, we know of a fellow in Germany who we believe would be willing to act as an interpreter, and would likely be willing to converse with them by telephone to hear their recollections. Help to clarify details.

We await your response.

Jim Graham

---

**The German predominance was evident in the header of the foregoing message which had been forwarded in Bolzano. The names of the two witnesses were evidently German as well. Mr. Righi's reply gave relief when he pointed out that Mr. Hosp's wife could communicate in English.**

**January 21, 2000**

Dear Mr. Graham!

The two gentlemen Mr. Frotscher and Mr. Hosp don't speak English – but the wife of Mr. Hosp - Dr. Inga Hosp speaks it. You could contact her at the phone or fax Nr-----  
The German speaking fellow can contact me or Mrs. Hosp.

PS: Pleas give me your post adress - so we can send you some images / maps and other touristic informations about RITTEN.

Bye

Peter Righi

-----  
**At last!---the team now had a person-to-person contact with a crash witness. Not only that—but with the ability to converse in English. Roland Geiger, the airwar researcher friend in Germany wouldn't be needed as a go-between. Jim shot off a message to Diana to initiate the contact.**

**January 21, 2000**

Hi Diana--

Contact once again. I was beginning to wonder if we were spooked. You might consider contacting the wife of Mr. Hosp, --Dr. Inga Hosp via telephone to feel her out about pumping Mr. Hosp for his recall of the incident. You might be able to set up a rapport with her that would make her husband feel at ease. You saw Roland Geiger's willingness to participate. If you want to bring him into the picture, we will have to bring him up to speed on the whole background. Let me know if you want me to start the process.

In the meantime, it might be good for us to scratch Peter Righi's itch to send us some tourism info. Hey, team! Send Mr. Righi your mailing address & express your interest in his beautiful area!

We'll have to wait for another response from Paolo , the Italian Army & the state archives. I've sent for MACR's on the 15th AF bombers that were reported down in Italy on October 20, 1944 so we might eliminate some of the contenders as potential Bolzano fallout on that date.

Awaiting your plan, Diana.

Jim

-----  
**Diana was reluctant to venture a phone call to Dr. Inga Hosp. She worried that a phone call would be too abrupt an introduction and that it would not allow her to adequately state the background to the search for her uncle Bill Wisner's crash site. Then she noted that the Hosp's had a FAX number, and decided to make the overture in written form. Diana quickly composed a single page FAX note and sent it off to Inga Hosp with a copy to Peter Righi to keep his role in the network visible. In the message, Diana posed a series of questions she would like Dr. Inga Hosp to query her husband, the real witness, about.**

**Jim then set about collecting and scanning into the computer those critical documents (mission reports, MACR's and statements) that would be needed to thoroughly brief the team's contacts in Italy. Several Italian air historians were contacted and letters sent to Italian military organizations that might corroborate the crash site and witness accounts.**

**Paolo Cagnan, the investigative reporter in Bolzano was also very busy asking questions of the team to direct his search for information and possible witnesses of the October 1944 crash. He was digging into news archives, Italian military records and contacting local air war historians. All of the bureaucratic sources seemed to be dry wells.**

**Jim studied the details of the Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR's) for each of the three P-38 pilots lost in the crash north of Bolzano to glean as much location detail as possible. The MACR for Virgil Olson was of particular interest because there was a German language report included. The report was a Luftwaffe record of the capture of Olson after he parachuted from the mid-air collision. It indicated that Olson survived and was transported to a Luftwaffe prison camp via the German interrogation center at Oberursel near Frankfurt. The MACR also had a notation that Olson was repatriated. Jim emailed the scanned Luftwaffe report to Roland Geiger, the German air war historian for translation to English, hoping to get some detail of the location where Olson was captured.**

**When digging through her grandmother's trunk that held all of her correspondence about the loss of son Bill, Diana found letters written after the war by Virgil Olson to her grandmother lamenting Bill's loss. Indeed, Olson had lived and returned to the U.S. Diana had tried to locate Olson via searches through the directories available on the Internet, but had not succeeded. Jim emailed John Mullins, the editor of the 1st Fighter Newsletter, to request the membership of the 1st Fighter Association to try to find Olson and Anderson, the post mission statement author.**

**The request astounded Mullins. John was flying that October 1944 mission as a flight leader in the 94th Squadron and had recorded Olson as KIA in his history of the 1st Fighter Group, "An Escort of P-38's". John responded that he didn't understand how any of the three lost pilots could have survived. The 94th was somewhat lower and off to the side, but all that was seen was falling, burning debris and no parachutes were observed. About a week passed before Dr. Inga Hosp replied to Diana's FAXed query.**

**January 26, 2000**

Diana wrote:

"I just now received a fax from Dr. Inga Hosp. Rather than wait until tonight to scan it and risk a fuzzy copy, I'll just transcribe it here. It's short but very cordial." ----

Dear Mrs. Dale,

Thank you for your Fax letter. Certainly I am ready for helping you, but it will take some time for the research. After talking again with my husband who was only 6 years old when an American airplane crashed into the forest near Riggermoos/Ritten (which is called Renon by the Italians, but we are German speaking by mother language, like most of the people in South Tyrol, which belonged to Austria until 1918, as you may know) I will first talk to my husband's elder brother Josef (born 1934) who took along his younger brother to the wrecked plane. Then I will talk to Mr. Frotscher who grew up near that place and may know more than even my husband's brother.

(My husband's family lived then two miles away from the place, in the village Klobenstein. Occasionally our house, where we live since 1974, is only

200 metres away from the place.) But most of all I want to talk to Mr. Ramoser (over 80 years old), who stayed at Ritten all the years throughout war (which is not so normal because most of the German speaking native people in South Tyrol had been expelled by the Italian Fascists). And after the war he had some official competences as a kind of mayor or so -- so that he could know perhaps something about the remainings, burial place, etc.

So please be so kind to wait just one or two weeks. Then I'll come over with more news.

Best wishes and yours sincerely,  
Inga Hosp

"It's going to be a long two weeks."

Diana

---

**At this point, the Bolzano newspaper reporter, Paolo was very active, gathering as much information as he could about the 1944 crash incident so that he could start a series of articles about the search in his Alto Adige newspaper. The team decided to alert Dr. Hosp to his activity, but did not inform Paolo of Inga's presence or information so that she could conduct her inquiry without any outside interference or publicity. The team continued to feed Paolo with as much data as possible. Email traffic was at a high pitch.**

**Mr. Righi of the Ritten tourism agency sent some colorful brochures about the Ritten area and its attractions and accommodations. In the packet was a very informative pictorial map of the beautiful Tyrolian plateau & mountains. From the addresses that had been sent earlier for the Hosp family and the village where the 1944 crash occurred, the locale took on a new and highly visual quality.**

**At this same time, Geiger emailed his translation of the Luftwaffe report (KJUI-2323).**

**January 31, 2000**

from:Rolgeiger@aol.com

KJUI - 2323

.....this is the translated text:

formular 1a

Data about capture of a member of an enemy air force  
Office: Flieger Horst Kommandantur (Air Base Command)  
location: Bosen date: Oct 23, 1944

distribution:

Kgf = Kriegsgefangenen = POW  
Weiterleitstelle = office responsible for leading POW from collection point to Stalag  
FLGK = (I don't know)  
Auswertestelle West = Interrogation Center, Oberursel  
Entwurf = sketch = where to be filed

name and first name: Virgil O. Olson, born Aug 27, 1915  
rank: 1st Lt

residence before the war: unknown  
serial number O-762394 T43 44 A (blood number and faith)

Location and exact time of downing (downing by whom, fighter plane, flak?)  
on Oct 20, 1944 about 12 o'clock in the Sarn Valley  
Alpenvorland = the area in front of the Alps  
(no English expression = no Alps outside Europe)  
not known who shot him down

Location and exact time of capture:  
in the Sarn Valley (Alpenvorland see above) on Oct 20, 1944 about 12 o'clock

Details about capture (crashed, bailed out, parachuted?):  
the pilot was salvaged from the wreck of his airplane (slightly wounded)

type of plane (exact sign of the fuselage): Lightning

Crew members (alive, dead, wounded, where do they stay): The pilot was  
salvaged slightly wounded.

signature  
Lt and taking-over officer

Tschüs

Roland

-----

## CHAPTER 7 -- THE SARNTAL CONNECTION

**There it was! In this translated Luftwaffe report, Olson's capture location was in the Sarn Valley. Where is the Sarn Valley? Jim thoroughly scanned road maps and atlases of Italy with no luck. WWII combat charts were checked with no success. Then, studying the pictorial tourism map sent from Ritten, Jim saw a small notation in the upper left corner with an arrow pointing west and labeled 'SARNTAL'. He quickly fired off an email to Mr. Righi at the Ritten tourist agency.**

**February 1, 2000**

Dear Mr. Righi--

Could your office please send me via email a description of the Sarn valley and its location with respect to Ritten? I assume there is a Sarn River running through it.

Thank you,

Jim Graham

-----

**Mr. Righi's generous spirit of cooperation was evident in the next response from Europe.**

**He had passed the request on to his fellow tourism director in the Sarn Valley.**

**February 3, 2000**

From: info@sarntal.com

Dear Mr. Graham,

Thank You very much for Your e-mail to the Tourist Office of the Ritten in witch  
You ask for descriptions of the Sarnvalley, special for a "Sarn-River"(?).

We can inform You, that doesn't exist any river in our valley, wich is named "Sarn-River".  
The principal river through our valley is named "Talfer", or in Italian languague "Talvera".

We can send You some information of our valley, but only in german or italian language.

Thank You for Your interest for our valley.

Yours faithfully,

Tourist Office Sarnvalley  
Walter Perkmann

-----

**The two page attachment to his message was a German language promotional document describing the vacation and skiing attributes of the region. There was no map or distance information evident in the material and the language barrier prevented anysimple derivation of the location answer. It was obvious that Mr. Perkmann did not know the real purpose of the inquiry about the Sarn Valley, so another email was sent to acquaint him with the search effort.**

**February 3, 2000**

To: info@sarntal.com

Attn: Walter Perkmann

Dear Herr Perkmann,

I very much appreciate your rapid reply to my inquiry. I would like to have some information about your valley and I hope it would include a detailed map of your area.

The item which led me to inquire about your valley was a German Luftwaffe report of the capture of one of my squadron's pilots in October 1944. I have been doing some historical research for my squadron and have been investigating materials that exist in the U. S. National Archives. I will attach a copy of that report to this message for your interest. I would be very interested if there were any residents of your valley who might have witnessed the crash of the airplane or the capture of the pilot. The aircraft was a P-38 Lightning--a twin engine fighter airplane with two tail fuselages.

I again thank you and will be pleased to receive the information about the Sarnvalley.

Jim Graham  
Seattle, WA U.S.A.

---

**A pair of somewhat unexpected replies were received.**

**February 9, 2000**

From: Goeller Florian goeland@dnet.it

Hello Mr. Jim Graham

My name is Göller Andreas and I am a friend of Mair Christoph, that is the teenager that make the practise job on the tourist office in the Sarnvalley, where you have asked Herr Perkmann about some information during the second world war. We two go to the same school and at the moment we have two weeks something like a practise job at some offices in our valley. We are very interested in your research and so we both the last days worked very hard on your questions, but now to our results about this historical event.

- In the last day we watched in archives in our valley but we didn't found some written papers about this crash of the airplane, so we went to Bolzano ( the capitol of SouthTyrol) to the biggest library. Also there we watched in papers of october the 21 and so one, but we didn't found information.  
- Now a better information, my grandfather was witnessed of this crash of the airplane, at this time he was 14 years old and his father at this time was a "Sodmann"(that means he had to work a something like a soldier for Hitler) here in the Sarnvalley. So the american airplane with the pilot Virgil O. Olson was shot by a german "Flak"( that was a big cannon or gun). This "Flak" was situated on the mountain (the exact place its called "Kirchkorn" in german), it is a place in the mountains between "Pens" and "Durnholz" (this are two short valleys of the big sarnvalley). So when the american airplane was took by the shot of the "Flak", so the airplane began to smoke and my grandfather saw also that ca. 3 or 4 persons made a parachute jump out of the airplane. The airplane afterward crashed to a mountain it's called in dialect german "Garmesegg" and there the pilot was capture, he has not big hurts. The other three american soldiers were founded in the mountains of "Durnholz" and also captured by german soldiers, also the other American soldier was captured.

I'm sorry I have at the moment not more information, I don't know whats exactly happended with the american soldiers that were captured and I have no information about the airplane (Lightning).

I hope with this research you have enough information, it's not so easy to find more stuff about this event.

So I wish you good luck by your researches, I hope you can understand everything, because my English is not so good.

Ok greets from SoutTyrol (ITALY)

Andreas Göller

---

**February 10, 2000**

Dear Mr. Graham

I have received your E-Mail today.

I am a 18 year old boy, and I attend a commercial school in Bolzano.

At the moment I am here in the Tourist Office to make two weeks of practice, to learn more about business.

After this week I must return to school, so if you have further information for me or other you can contact me with the following E-Mail address.

mair.christoph@dnet.it or mair.christoph@tiscalinet.it

My interests are history, the armed forces and technology.

I hope you have received the E-Mail from my friend, about a aircraft, that came from North and was shut down by a German Fluck.

As soon as possible I will send you a map of our area with the crashpoints.

At least I want say you that I can understand your language, my motherlanguage is German, my second language is Italian at the third is English

Yours sincerely, Mair Christoph

---

**There were two more searchers added to the team---two eager young interns at the Sarntal tourist agency! As evidenced by their messages, there was a fragile linguistic link. It took several email exchanges before the U.S. team members understood that it was Christoph Mair—not Mair Christoph! Jim emailed them a photo of a P-38.**

**February 10, 2000**

Dear Jim Graham

Yes the computer was able to show us the picture (photo) of the P-38. It's also true that the story that I have told you in the last E-Mail is not correct, because my grandfather said also that in this airplane were eight people, because it was a "Bomber".

Yes our first language here is German, the second one is Italian and the third one English. So we studied English only for three years at school and our written English is not so good. I think I speak much better in English, because I was four months ago in America (New York, Washington and Amherst).

So I hope you will find more information about the event, and it would be perfect if you let us know all of the research that you make, because it is a very interesting historical adventure.

Secure we will send you an E-Mail if we find more information about this event.

Good luck

bye

Andreas

---

**Jim was eager to keep these two students involved in the search effort, as they obviously had roots in the Sarn Valley.**

**February 10, 2000**

To: Goeller Florian; Mair Christoph

Good morning fellows!

Thank you both for your efforts to locate Lt. Olson's crash site and any witnesses or information related to his parachute landing and capture. I understand you will be going back to school next week, but I hope you won't forget about our search. If you ever find any local information about the incident we hope you will send us an email. Ms. Diana Dale is very hopeful that we will find some witness or very factual information about her uncle, Lt. Bill Wisner, who also was involved in the event over your area on October 20, 1944.

The eye witness account that I sent you with the photo is about all the real evidence we have of the situation, but there also was a report from a bomber pilot who was flying nearby that day, that he saw two parachutes coming from the three P-38 crash. He was at quite a distance, so we can't be very sure about that report as evidence pertaining to our search.

Our search has been very active since the first of this year and we have made lots of helpful contacts. We are also communicating with people in the Ritten area and Bolzano who have some possibilities of witnesses, so we hope to collect enough information to know what & where it all happened 55 years ago.

I will follow up with more information to you later. You might be interested in the story of another search we recently completed for another pilot from my squadron. The story is told in the website at [www.behindbarbedwire.com/carlh.htm](http://www.behindbarbedwire.com/carlh.htm)

Thanks again. We hope to hear more from you.  
Best wishes,  
Jim Graham

---

**The next morning, Christoph Mair greeted the team with a very promising message.**

**February 11, 2000**

Dear Mr. Graham

Yesterday I get news from my Math teacher, with luck we have found the aircraft you are searching.

I have new informations about two or three aircrafts crashed in my

neighborhood.

One of the pilots was arrested by the German army, his right foot was in a bad situation but he could walk.

I have another information about a pilot, I think but I am not sure, he died in the crash, men found his body without life.

I hope to can give you further information next week, when I have spoken with the persons who saw the pilots and aircrafts in 1944.

The first information can underline the date and the time when the aircrafts crashed.

Can you tell me how was the 20.10.1944 with sun or rain.

Yours sincerely

Mair Christoph  
-----

**The scenario was a good fit to the October 20, 1944 mission! The pilot with the injured foot was surely Olson. Was the dead pilot Wisner or Twedt? Hold it!--Don't jump to conclusions! Maintain the analytical search mode! So back to Christoph--**

**February 11, 2000**

Good man! You are still searching!

I checked the mission reports. Our squadron mission report said the weather was clear and visibility unlimited, so the sun was likely shining at 11:20 AM.

The other squadrons that went on up to Regensburg encountered some clouds as they got close to Innsbruck. They reported a cloud cover of 6/10 in that area.

As you question your witnesses, could you please find out if they think that any pieces of the airplanes might still remain. Sometimes the people liked to save a small remembrance of the event. We would also like to know the details & people who were the first to find the pilot who parachuted to the ground.

Thank you very much for your continuing effort.

Jim Graham  
-----

**Email communication keeps a tight loop—while sending one, the answer may be in the mailbox!**

**February 11, 2000**

A friend told to me that during the summer, when he must going in the mountains, he can see pieces of aircrafts and a big railgun.

I must now ask him better.

Good night Mr. Graham

p. s. now I am leaving the Tourist office. my address mair.christoph@dnet.it

Yours

Mair Christoph

-----

**The Luftwaffe capture report on Olson was emailed to Christoph to provide him with more ammunition to query the local populace and to spark their recollections of the incident 56 years into the past.**

**February 12, 2000**

Subject: I am back to school

Hello Mr. Graham

I must say you, that I am very missing the work.

I must ask you if you can resend the the two E-Mails you have written to the Tourist Office. Because I need them for a report, that I must write in the next days. I need the two E-Mails sent to the Tourist Office on the 9.02 with the subjects:

"Air chrash description an P-38 Photo" and "Re: News about the chrasch of USAF-planes in Sarnvalley"

Thank you for the capture report, the report will be very helpful for me.

Your hear from me, when I can find new informations.

Mair Christoph

-----

**The requested messages were re-sent. Maybe his report at school might spark some fellow searchers for airplane parts & debris.**

## **CHAPTER 8 -- THE RECRUIT IN RITTEN**

**Meanwhile, earlier in the week, the two weeks had passed since Inga Hosp had started the questioning of her husband and Mr. Frotscher. As she promised, Inga replied to Diana and her message was relayed to the team.**

**February 08, 2000**

Answer from Dr. Hosp

It just came, and because it's a fax, I'll transcribe it. The bad news is there's not a lot to go on; the good news is she has email now, and she's still on it.

-----

"Dear Mrs. Dale,

Today I received your lovely wildlife letter and your uncle's image. Thank you very much! My own son Matthias has his age right now: 20 years! Studying veterinary medicine at Vienna university. And just thinking that he could be involved in war activities, makes me upset. Even more: as a little girl (born 1943 in Munich) I grew up with first childish memories of kindly laughing American soldiers and their gifts of chewing gums, Baby Ruth-bars and baby dolls (which could drink "milk" and even piss). One of the old friendships of that time lasted for 50 years! But this, I guess, is not what you want to hear from me.

During the last seven days I did the following:

1. Talking to all the eye-witnesses, you know already: all of them reported that there was a lot of snow when the plane crashed. This is unusual for the altitude (1350m) and for October but could have occurred nevertheless. All of them reported two soldiers who saved themselves by parachutes, and one dead between the wreckage; the parachute jumpers being arrested by German security SOD (South Tyrol by this time, after Mussolini's end, was occupied by German troops), the corpse and other remainings transported away;

2. Calling the local priest: no registration of a grave;

3. Contacting Black Cross organization; they look after soldiers' graves. The research is still going on.

I'll now try to get contact to a former American Airforce officer living at Innsbruck who is said to own lists of crashed American aircrafts in this part of the Alps. Let me, please, check if this is a mere rumour or more. I also want to know which other aircrafts crashed in our region round Oct. 20, 1944. The only newspaper, I've been told, did not report such events, but I want to check personally in a library and in an archive. All this will need some time, but I won't give up, and I think you would do the same for me: question of humanitarianism.

While I write this, your fax letter arrived. Strange thing: I am a journalist myself, free lancer and working more in the fields of culture, and have no primal interest to write about the case. And perhaps the results could increase if the reporter goes his way and I go mine. So let's leave it like it is now.

To me it seems important not to rely too much upon the conviction that the Ritten aircraft was your uncle's. By the way: Do you have any personal file, numbers like those, every soldier had? That's all for today, more soon, I hope.

Yours sincerely,  
Inga

P.S. Last weekend my new i-Mac has been delivered, so we now can correspond by E-Mail, too: inga.hosp@rolmail.net.

PPS. I wonder what's the job you are doing, Diana."

Well, that's something. And what a gracious lady. We got lucky with her on our side.

All eyewitnesses agreed there were two parachutes and one dead, but I didn't expect two captures... I was hoping to get answers, not more questions. I'm going to email her right now with Bill's serial number. Thank goodness she's got email -- those faxes I was sending were getting expensive!

I guess we wait some more.

D

-----  
**It was a tremendous break to find that Dr. Inga Hosp had acquired email capability---the dynamics of the search would be severely limited if the delays of regular mail correspondence were involved. The team was anxious to cultivate Inga's willingness to exchange rapid fire messages and data files, but wanted to tread softly on her good nature and newly acquired email skills. Diana sent her a long, friendly message introducing herself and the background to her search effort. Inga responded in kind with a good introduction to her family and background. It was evident that there was a mutual affinity.**

**Inga also provided the name of a retired airman, Keith Bullock, in Austria who was doing significant research into U.S. bomber crash sites in the Tyrol. [Ed. note: Contrary to Inga's assumption that Bullock was a U. S. airman, it was later determined that he was formerly with the RAF]. Then, the following day, she sent another message describing an even more exciting contact.**

**February 12, 2000**

Dear Diana,

More news, fresh as can be, and: the puzzle is complete!

Half an hour ago I got a phone call from Mr. Hans Grimminger from Augsburg/Germany who studied, for another research some years ago, the Washington Archives. He found the missing link in his computer. William O Wisner was one of four members of 1st. Fighter Group-Lightnings, downed Oct. 20, 1944 after being hit over Bozen/Bolzano some miles north of Sarnthein, near the village of Weißenbach. The pilots' names are Olsen (71st. Fighter Squadron, Nr. 9314), Tweed (9313), Elliot (he brought down his plane near Ancona in an emergency landing) and Wisner (9312).

In the Missing Air Crew Report he is mentioned as "lost". Also the German reports (Abschußberichte) which are in Washington, too, mention the lost under KSUJ 2323.

After several interviews I did during the last days I was already almost sure that the plane crashed near our house at Ritten was not your uncle's; this must have been a bomber and it must have been during winter 44. Before starting this letter I phoned a friend in the neighbored community of Sarntal/Val Sarentino who will do the local inquiry for me. About next Wednesday I will be ready to give you the rest of the details. The research concerning the grave will go on.

Please be so kind to contact Mr. Grimminger. He was a member of the 15. Luftflotte and did much research for both Americans and Germans. Perhaps he would be pleased by a thankful word. His address:  
Lange Gewanne 67  
D-86156 Augsburg  
Tel.( & Fax?) 0049 821 462973

Best regards until soon

Inga

-----  
**Such a fabulous find! Mr. Grimminger was fully acquainted with the crash incident of October 20,1944! He had all of the MACR's for Olson, Twedt and Wisner and even the Luftwaffe capture report for Olson. Jim was about to leave home for a two week trip, so he alerted Diana and realized he was leaving the loop at a very critical time.**

**February 14, 2000**

Hi Diana--

It looks like a loop has been closed on the Sarnvalley. I wonder how Inga brought Grimminger into the loop. Does he have some connection with Bullock in Innsbruck? Has there been any contact with Bullock?

Somewhere in this morning's messages from you I thought I saw one that said you had tied Inga into Mair's messages----but I must have lost it in manipulating the mail to files. I wonder if Inga's friend in Sarntal/Val Sarentino knows him-----can't be too big a community. It'll be interesting to see what effects these looping connections have. I hope they are synergistic & that the team is growing.

I will be going on a trip on Thursday (2/17) & will return on Mar. 2nd. I hope to take my laptop to keep in the loop, but may not have phone line access where I'll be. I won't have access to recent messages either, so I'll probably act stupid----even if I do get online. In any case, I'll try to keep my finger on the pulse even if only occasionally. Keep the ball rolling!

Cheers,

Jim

---

## CHAPTER 9 -- DIANA SOLO's

**In the six weeks of probing the Internet for some meaningful information source pertinent to the triple P-38 crash a half century ago, the team found itself blessed with an abundance of amazingly congenial, helpful, dedicated volunteers from the very lands which had been under attack by our air forces. Paolo Cagnan, the Alto Adige reporter; Christoph Mair, the student intern at the Sarntal tourist agency; Dr. Inga Hosp, the Ritten cultural affairs activist; and now Otto Grimminger, the Augsburg, Germany air war researcher were all uniquely qualified sources to help the team converge on its goal--the precise location of Bill Wisner's crash site and the recovery of actual artifacts from the crash which would conclusively identify his resting place long sought by his family.**

**It was time for the team to organize its resources for a concerted, but orderly and well documented search in the Sarntal area. The team's volunteers had not met nor known of each other until the call for help came via the Internet. Hopefully, they could cooperatively bring the search to the desired conclusion.**

**Up to this point the new volunteers had been unaware of each other's membership in the Wisner search team. It was time to get them acquainted with each other. Diana mailed a letter to Mr. Grimminger giving him the background and particulars of the search effort and forwarded Jim's correspondence with Christoph Mair to Inga. Jim cleared up a few points before leaving contact with the search team for the next two weeks.**

**February 14, 2000**

Diana--

It sounds like Grimminger is a thorough researcher. He has most of the same archived materials on that mission that I have. I have all of the mission reports from the 1st Ftr. Gp. and the 71st Sqdn. as well as all of the MACR's for the pilots lost from the 1st/71st. He also must have personally dug for the German capture report on Olson as they have to be linked to the MACR. The key ingredient we need is the personal follow-up in the area, which we are trying to corral by email. It may be possible that he has visited the area previously and identified sites & records.

I think rather than stir Bullock up to a high pitch yet, I think we should see what return you get from Grimminger and the residents in the Sarnvalley. I will send Bullock the summary of the mission & ask if he has done any research in the Sarntal area & indicate to him that we think we have some potential witnesses or area residents that are investigating. I would like to make contact with him for further search work as well.

Capt. Elliott was flying as #3 in Olson's flight & was hit by flak at the same time as Olson. He was able to make it back to Ancona, Italy the emergency base. He was killed in one of the last missions of the war on 15 Apr. 45. & went down just east of Munich. He was a Major then & our operations officer & a prince of a guy.

If you look at the graphic terrain map in the back of your Ritten tourist book, you can see the arrow to Sarntal at the left margin. I think the Sarnvalley is that crease to the right of Sarner Scharte & to the south. Mair said he would send us a map of the known crash sites. His boss at the tourist agency was also going to send a tourist brochure. I'd guess maybe 5+ km from Inga.

I hope I can stay loosely connected while away from home. I, too, am anxious to see what develops.

Jim

---

**Diana was now in the hot seat in the U. S. Email traffic kept rolling along.**

**February 15, 2000**

Dear Diana,

Receiving your Mails this afternoon I was very much astonished about another local E-Mail address, contacted the tourist's association at Sarnthein, but Christoph Mair was already away. So I wrote him an E-Mail to his private address, asking to call me in the evening. In the meantime a friend in the Sarn valley did a research for me which proved the 3 crashes and the localizations. Christoph will look after the local details so that we do no double work. Is that o.k.? Until now we are rather sure only about Olson's way down from the crash point high up in the mountains down to the street where he seems to be taken as POW. It is a pity that we couldn't research some years earlier, because most of the eye witnesses now are dead.

My friend has been said that one of the two victims was buried at the crash point, and that the other one died during the transport to the next village, Weißenbach. But who was who?

Anyway: we won't give up.  
Best regards  
Inga

---

**Diana followed up with Inga & Christoph.**

**February 15, 2000**

Dear Inga,

I'm glad my messages got through all right. I'm happy to know you have made contact with Mair Christoph. I think he is an enthusiastic participant. I'm astounded that you now know of the exact locations of each crash site. Would it be possible for your friend to identify them on a detailed geographic map? I think Jim already knows where Virgil Olson's plane hit,

but I'm pretty sure he didn't know the other two sites were identified. And your information about one pilot dying in the crash and one dying during transport is most important. I would love to hear more details of that, if you can get them.

Who was who, indeed? It will be good to find out what happened to the bodies of both of them. Is there some official record of what was done in those days? I'm sure the Germans have records somewhere, but did the local government keep any files?

There was a search of the Bolzano area conducted by the U.S. in 1947 or 1948, but the report said that no crash sites were found. However, they did remove some bodies (14 of them, I think) from a cemetery in Mirandola. Is Mirandola near the Sarn Valley? (I'm familiar with the artist Pico della Mirandola, but I never knew where Mirandola was). If it is close, would that have been a logical place to bury unknown foreigners?

You're right; it is a shame we didn't do this years ago. My grandmother never gave up hope, but by 1950 she stopped writing the government and the embassies, having gained no more information. But I really don't think this would have been possible without today's Internet. It would have taken so long to get correspondence back and forth, the immediacy would be lost and enthusiasm would diminish. Every incorrect lead would have used too much time. With the Internet, a dead end is just a fork in the road that is easily corrected with little time wasted. I'm just hoping my mother stays in good health until we get some answers so I can tell her all about it. She and my father will be in Colorado for the summer at their mountain home. I would love to be able to tell them about this face to face.

Thank you, thank you for not giving up. I would give anything to be there to help.

All my thanks,  
Diana

-----

**Email exchanges between different time zones in the U.S. and in Europe took on a new complexity. The interchange became so rapid that it became difficult to determine the sequence and the relevance of one message to the next.**

**February 16, 2000**

Dear Diana,

Until tomorrow, when the service man should arrive (today we got a lot of snow, so we postponed the visit up to our altitude of 1350m, half an hour from Bozen which is only 300 m above sea level) Christoph Mair called me from below (his place in the Sarn valley is on about 1000 m - all this to give you more orientation about our region), asking for an image of your uncle. Tomorrow I'll make another copy from the copy you sent me - and send it to him. You see, the chain is o.k.

He told me to have made some interviews today and wanted also to know how tall your uncle was and the colour of his hair. From The image it looks somewhat dark. One of the downed dead Sarn valley Pilots is remembered as with red hair. Your uncle could have been the other one. Without being too optimistic: perhaps these informations could help. But I don't want to speculate.

After he would have received the image and done more interviews I'll go down to his place and talk to him personally. And I'll gather picture postcards, a map and so on and send it to you.

Kindly

Inga

---

**February 16, 2000**

Dear Mair,

Hello! I'm the woman who started this whole process of finding lost pilots, and my uncle was William O. Wisner. I'm so pleased you have joined the search. Thank you for your help.

Dr. Inga Hosp emailed me a message saying you would like more information on the physical description of my uncle. I will attach a file with his photo to this message, so you can see for yourself. Of course, the photo is in black and white, but you can tell that he had dark hair. He was fairly tall, about 6 feet 1 inch (nearly two meters?), and had just turned 20 years old August 1, 1944.

I think the other pilot, Lowell Twedt, had a lighter complexion and could very well have had red hair. I have his photo in my files and will scan it for you. He's wearing a hat on in the photo, so it is difficult to tell for certainty what color his hair was.

Thank you again for your help. I can't express strongly enough how important it is to me.

My very best wishes,

Diana Dale

---

**Diana kept feeding email to Jim even though he would likely not see it for two weeks.**

**February 16, 2000**

Jim, here's the latest from and to Inga. She and Mair have connected!

I got a letter from one of the alpine clubs. It's in German, but between my hubby's rusty high school remnants and obvious context, we were able to

determine that the information provided was about another pilot who went down in April 1944 named John Weiss. I scanned the letter, but the enclosures didn't scan right, so I'll re-do it and send it to you for your archives. He enclosed a map and a personal data sheet on Weiss. The data sheet confused me, though, because it has his 1960 marriage date on it, as well.

Hope your trip was good.

D

---

**\* SEE FIGURE 4 FOR MAP OF THE SARNTAL SEARCH AREA**

### CHAPTER 10 -- PAOLO THE SLEUTH

**The Sarntal activity was really heating up. But what about Paolo at the newspaper in Bolzano? He'd been a very busy reporter!**

**February 18, 2000**

Bolzano, 18th of February 2000

Hi Jim, Diane and all the others

After a very busy week, I have eventually enough time to tell you something about my research. I really would like to tell you that I've found the exact location of the crash, but in fact I'm still investigating.

You know, working with this kind of oral and written sources is quite difficult: believe me, it's almost impossible to find documents regarding this case. I couldn't even find the exact location of every Flak group in this Land, because of the absolute lack of informations: every piece of paper was destroyed.

Working with the oral history is hard, too, because everyone remembers different things in a different way and different times. In addition, most of the male locals which are now 70-80 years old were abroad - mostly in Russia - during WWII.

So, almost no direct witnesses of the events.

As I've already told you, I establish that the crash location, I mean 5 km NE of Bolzano, should be between the middle Isarco valley and two planos: Renon and Sciliar.

Speaking with a former Luftwaffe pilot, he told me that he has heard many times the story/legend of an American pilot, who planned with his parachute on some rocks in the middle of the Sciliar, at about 2500 metres, during 1944. He was "saved" by local climbers and then captured by the Germans.

That's it.

I thought, it could be Olson. But I needed more. Specially, I needed the remains of the Wisner's P-38. I spoke to many locals, then I simply decided to go there, arranging some meetings. I did it thursday, with the former Luftwaffe pilot - Anton Weissteiner - and a journalist - Giancarlo Ansaloni - who has been lived there, between the villages of Siusi and Castelrotto, for many years.

After a very hard day, interviewing about ten people, I still don't know if I've found the solution or not. I have to distinguish between real facts, legends and mental confusion after so many years. So, I'm trying to give you the most objective picture of what I got.

It's absolutely sure that an American airplane crashed in the area in 1944. It crashed in the middle of some trees in San Costantino, few houses between the villages of Fiè and Siusi. It crashed during the daytime: it could have been around 11.30, that means "our" time. Apparently, no one can distinguish between a fighter and a bomber, but many locals think it was a fighter. Two or three persons remember that the airplane, which was partially in flames, circled around the villages of Fiè and Siusi at about 300 meters, before crashing between the trees with a very "noisy" ground impact.

I would say, It couldn't have been a B-17 or a B-24. I spoke to Keith Bullock, a former Raf pilot which lives in Tyrol. He made a list of the allied bombers-crashes in the area (only bombers, unfortunately) and he has no informations regarding this case.

After the crash, many locals went there, as you can imagine. And many took several pieces of the airplane. I found one piece, which was used by a local farmer to create a monument made by this piece and other bomb-pieces. It's what we call a "longherone", which I can't translate into English. It's a tube with this characteristics. it's about 120 cm long, it has a square shape and a diameter of 5-6 cm. Weissteiner believes that an expert of the USAAF could determine if it was part of a P-38.

I took some pictures: in the next days I'll scan them and send to you. The farmer - which is 73 - thinks that some remains could still be there, but we should wait for the good season (now it's snowing) and try to locate them, maybe with a metal detector which I don't have. Speaking about the period, many locals believe that it could be October, but a local historian - not a professional one, a retired teacher - wrote a book in which he set the event in July, 1944. If he's right, we're wrong and the case is closed.

Many locals remember that a corps was found inside the plane. Only one corps. So again, it couldn't have been a bomber. Was it Wisner's body? I tried to find an indication in the official documentation of the local cemetery, 'cause someone told me that the body was buried there, before it was given to the Americans, probably in 1946. I have to check the reports of the local Town council. It could be the best way to find out the truth. I'll do it in the next week, 'cause it was closed.

Now the biggest problem: no one seems to have noticed an explosion in the air (Olson's plane against Twedt's plane) but many - almost all - remember that two pilots went down on parachute. The first, as I told you, finished between the rocks at about 2500 m. The second it's another stuff, because everyone has different memories. Someone it's not sure that the two episodes (the crash in San Costantino and the two parachutes) happened the same day. And all this is very confusing. One survivor it's enough: it could have been Olson and it were "perfetc": Wisner died, Olson survived and was captured. But what about the second prisoner?

Now I need your help again:

- 1) it's possible to find out where exactly Olson was captured, before he was sent to the Stalag in Germany?
- 2) are you absolutley sure that Twedt died after the crash?
- 3) If yes, could you find out what happened to him then? When and where his body was recover? How where the conditions of the body? If its remains were never recovered, as Wisner, how can we be sure that he wasn't captured by the Germans, too?
- 4) someone of the locals told me that one of the prisoners was a coloured: what about Twedt and Olson?

You could maybe ask CILHI for further information.

I don't know if I told you everything, but I do hope so.  
If that's "our" case, I would feel like a Pulitzer-winner.  
If not, I'll have to start again.  
But don't worry, in every case I'll survive!!!

ciao  
Paolo

---

**Diana followed up.**

**February 18, 2000**

Ciao, Paolo!

We were beginning to wonder if you'd disappeared, but it looks like you've just been very busy.

Jim is out of town for a couple of weeks, so I will try to answer what questions I can. He's the keeper of the files, so I may not be able to give you everything you need, but I'll try.

Since we last heard from you, a lot has happened. Jim was able to obtain a copy of Olson's capture report, which places his landing in the Sarn Valley. I don't know if this is where you've been looking or not, because none of the towns are familiar to me. I will attach a copy of that report to this message, and perhaps you can locate the crash. That should answer your question Number 1. As for the other questions, I will answer them in order.

2. I'm not absolutely sure that Twedt died. However, my grandmother was never able to find any record of his return. I have ordered his file from the U.S. government, but it hasn't arrived yet (it takes as long as six months, and I ordered it over 3 months ago).

3. I'm hoping Twedt's file will reveal what happened to his remains. Wisner's file mention remains, but it cannot say for sure they belonged to him. They were in a mausoleum in Griesheim/Main, Germany, along with an identification bracelet, but there are holes in the file that leave us guessing as to how the remains and bracelet got there, where they came from, why they were mentioned in my uncle's file, and where they went after they were removed. CILHI tells me that the file that could answer these questions is "missing." That's why we had to start searching at your end. There are too many gaps in the story.

4. Lowell Twedt was white; I don't know about Olson, but I'm pretty sure he was white, too. We still have had no luck in finding out if Olson is still alive, but Jim is working on it.

Jim said he would try to get on line while he's away. If he's successful in getting connected, perhaps he will have more to add, especially about the airplane parts.

In the meantime, thank you for all your hard work. I know it will pay off for all of us. Your dedication is admirable.

Here is the capture report.

Diana  
-----

**Diana was anxious to tie Paolo into the Sarntal merry-go-round!**

**February 18, 2000**

Jim

If you've gotten this email from me, you no doubt were able to get Paolo's, too. I cc'd you on my response to him, but I deliberately left anyone's name out of the mix.

But he's getting so involved, I think we need to get him onto the right track. I haven't heard from Mair since my last email, but perhaps the two of them should join forces. Paolo seems to have some good contacts, and Mair could be his legs. Since you're the primary contact for both of them, I leave it up to you to decide. Your instinct for not getting Paolo in touch with Inga was a good one, since "her" crash was a dead end. Her life doesn't need any unnecessary complications, but she's still so involved, I don't see how she can keep from crossing Paolo's path -- especially since she's working with Mair.

But we may have narrowed down the location, and I'd hate for Paolo to be spinning his wheels, searching in the wrong place. If he's after a Pulitzer,

he should at least get the story right...

Standing by (and it's killing me!),

D  
-----

**Paolo had discovered Inga.**

**February 20, 2000**

Ciao Diane

I analysed the Olson's capture report: no parachute at all: it's written that the pilot was "rescued" from the remains of its Lightning. That means only one thing: Anderson was wrong when he spoke about a collision between Olson's and Twedt's planes. No explosion in the air. No deflagration. Olson landed in the Sarntal Valley, and landed so "softly" that he could survive the crash. The valley is mountaineous with lots of trees. I cant' imagine how could the P-38 land in this territory, but we have to believe that the German report is correct.

Today I had a very bad surprise: a local German-speaking newspaper wrote the story, for the first time. The article says that three P-38 were hit by the FLAK in the Sarntal valley. It doesn't mention any remains of both the other two airplanes and pilots. I was very disappointed: this was "my" story.

I think, it was Inga Hosp who gave the information to the newspaper. Have you ever heard from her? She is the wife of a local German politician. Someone told me two weeks ago that she was investigating the case, too. I tried to reach her, but I couldn't. Maybe, she doesn't want to speak to me. Actually, I don't know what she knows. Do you?

Tomorrow morning I'll go to Sarntal and look for any document.  
Please, if you are in touch with several other locals, tell it to me. I don't want to be the only one, but I worked very hard at this case and my editor will fire me if he knows that another newspaper publish the story at first, after all of my work.

ciao Paolo  
-----

**The team leaders had tried to maintain a degree of separation between the volunteer searchers in Italy during their initial participation to avoid limiting the scope of their efforts, but it became evident that all hands needed to be joined in a circle as the net tightened. With Jim traveling and not in touch, Diana was left dangling.**

**February 21, 2000**

HELP!!!!

Jim, If you've read the copies of my last two letters to Inga and Paolo, you know why I'm screaming.

I'm very embarrassed by this whole thing. Paolo has been working hard, and he's been on the wrong track, so he feels pretty betrayed. Of course, we didn't know he was chasing the wrong site, and couldn't have known, since he

was out of touch for more than a week while he was investigating, but I still feel guilty, guilty, guilty. ....

Who knew it would get to this? It's a mess, and I need (you) to back me up when we straighten it out. I'm trying to be as tactful as I can, but the sooner we get to full disclosure with everyone working together, the happier I'll be -- and the more I think we'll find out in the long run.

I hope your trip is good ("Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?"). I'll be so happy when you're back in touch. I feel like a ship without a rudder AND an anchor.

D

---

**There was relative quiet on the email circuit for the next few days as Inga was ill and Paolo's computer was also apparently ill.**

**February 22, 2000**

Greatings all

Unfortunately, since the last sunday my e-mail doesn't work. So, if you have sent to me some messages, please redirect them at this address, but if you answer me now, put both addresses.

Now the good news. I think we are really next to the truth. Yesterday I went to Sarntal, where Olson was captured. A fighter hit by the flak crashed between some trees at about 1200 meters, after having flew over the village of Sarentino at about 2-300 meters of altitude. Old locals are remembering of one dead pilot and two parachutes - these two pilotes were both captured and immediately transfer to Bolzano, where -as you know - I live. One is certainly Olson, the other could have been either Twedt or Wisner. There are still two or three direct witnesses. I will speak to them next Friday. I will go to the place of the crash, too. This place called "Garmisegg Wiesen" is quite isolated, about half an hour of hike or trek, I don't know. There is still a piece of the airplane, next to a hut. I'll find it and take some pictures for documentation. I still have no idea of the identity of the dead pilot: he wasn't buried at the local cemetery: I've already checked that out. I'm quite sure, I'll be able to reconstruct the dinamic of the accident and hopefully the identity of the dead, too.

The major of Sarentino is very cooperative; I suggest, if everything goes right it will be possible to organise a ceremony in the next summer. Maybe, to put there a small monument or something else for all the people who died making their duty during WWII and against every war.

Speaking about the Olson capture report, I can tell you that the document you sent to me is coming from Wetzlar, a small town north of Frankfurt. It used to be a "transit camp" for the air officer captured during WWII. Olson arrived there at the 23rd of October 1944: quite a long journey, from South Tyrol. The document doesn't come directly from the FLAK: that means that it could

be not so precise, speaking about Olson being extracted from the remains of the Lightning. It could be decisive to obtain informations regarding Twedt.

I'll attach five pictures. As I told you, in a small village I've found a "monument" made by pieces of bomb remains. There is a tube, which you can see from the pictures, which comes for sure from the remains of the fighter which crashed in San Costantino (Schlerngebiet) in 1944. Maybe it has nothing to do with our case, but I'm not so sure. So, you'd better check if this square tube (120 cm long, diameter of 5-6 cm) comes out of a P-38.

ciao  
Paolo

---

## CHAPTER 11 -- INGA COMES OUT SWINGING

**By the end of the week, the inhabitants of the Sarn Valley must surely have become aware that a search was being conducted throughout their idyllic countryside. Paolo was very actively interviewing people and collecting all sorts of hardware relics that had any possibility of being a remnant of the three P-38's that fell into the area in 1944. Inga had recovered from her illness and had teamed up with Christoph to explore the valley and to contact potential witnesses to the event.**

**February 26, 2000**

Dear Diana,

The following is only for you because Christoph and I made this research for you and for your mother - not for a newspaper reporter!

Today I picked up Christoph after school - a beautiful "first spring day" in late February - and we went to his home valley, the inner Sarntal behind the village of Aberstückl. We visited Jakob Weger, an old but vivid man and very friendly and cooperative, at his farm named Pluner (a site named "Plunerbach", which means brook near Pluner farm, was mentioned in the German report, Mr. Grimminger had sent me). He told us to have seen one plane crash in front of him (the site is called Aberstückler Nock, and the pilot must have been), and one behind him but much closer in northerly direction. The plane was going down in a steep dive, he saw smoke and he heard it crash down between the trees.

When reaching the place (about half an hour's walk above his farmhouse) he saw the wrecked plane and a totally burned body on the floor. And he saw, also on the floor near the corpse, a bracelet, black of smoke, but a name on it with two W, one of which he thought to be Werner. A neighbour has buried the corpse at this place, and he formed a wooden cross and put it into the earth.

Later on, after the end of the war, some merchant came to get away the metal parts of the wreckage, and with him a Carabinieri to look after the body. And Jakob is sure the human remains buried there have never been taken away because the exact place of the grave could not be found. Maybe the cross had been lost in the meantime - or they did not look at the

burial place itself.

Then Jakob told us where to find one part of the wreckage. We went there (near to the farmhouse) and found a strangely shaped (but which ever part of a wreckage is not strangely shaped) rather complex, heavy piece formed by several metals with numbers on it. Christoph digged it out from the snow and carried it to the farmhouse. It is undoubtedly a part of the engine.

(As I never thought to be able really to find something I did not bring along a camera. But on Monday or so I'll go again (it's about 45 minutes by car, up and down and down and up from my home) and take some photographs.

In the meantime I give you the numbers:

W 8438920    FD C 8621    H H (or K) 8

There were other numbers on another place on the same piece, a kind of scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 with other numbers in between these numbers, each three lined off with an elliptic shape.

Then Jakob brought an iron saw which he has made himself out of another piece of the wreckage (i.e. he fastened the blade on this piece). On a screw I found a gravure "Rockford S.P. Co". Jakob told us, all the pieces of the wreckage must consist by very good materials because there was never any rust on them. Out of another piece he has made an ashtray which he estimates very much.

Well, Diana, that was it, and we were rather content, as you can imagine. Christoph and I (and as well Jakob and his wife) are sure that we found the place where your uncle's life had really come to an end, and where his remains had been buried. The scenery is most beautiful. If Christoph had been alive in 1944 he could have watched the crash like a movie scene from the opposite side of the valley where his home is. (I will take a photograph from there, too)

If we are able to find the crash site (after the snow would have melted away totally, and Jakob will certainly join us and do his best), we could try to search with a metal detector (my husband's idea; he can get one)... at least we could form a new wooden cross, a better one this time, and leave it there as a sign of pity and remembrance.  
Next week I will send you a map and the photographs.

Best regards

Inga

-----  
**Inga was sure she had located Bill Wisner's crash site---but Paolo was not convinced. The information was coming thick & fast and many hardware artifacts needed to be validated or rejected as meaningful to the search. The team in the U.S. was becoming saturated with names of the individuals and locations being identified by the search team in Italy---let alone correlating both with the hardware found.**

**February 27, 2000**

Bolzano, Sunday the 27th of February, 2000

Ciao a tutti/greetings all!

The truth is very near, and not only a grain of it.

Today for the first time I went to the crash-site in Garmisegg with some helpful locals. It was a challenging trek. Between the trees, ice, mud and snow we could find 20-30 different remains. Some quite big, some smaller. Even bolts and spiral springs. You will receive this pictures on Tuesday or Wednesday.

I think, now is the time to re-read all our information, but the most important thing is that with my descriptions, pictures and identification numbers you should be able to determine if the remains I've found really come out of "your" P-38. In theory, it could be only Wisner's plane.

In theory.

Few hours ago, I've found a piece of iron with some inscriptions. One ends with "...tning". Do you think the same? LightNING

#### THE OFFICIAL SOURCES

Now let's look at the information we gathered from the official sources. I will underline my opinion:

- 20 October, 1944 at 11.20 AM (right, undirectly confirm by the Olson capture report),
- 5 km NE of Bolzano (partially wrong, Sarntal is north of Bolzano)
- the Olson letter of 1952 states that: he parachuted himself, he survived, he was slightly enjured, he was captured, he didn't realise that Wisner was involved in the accident, too. In his letter he didn't mention Twedt, too. So, he didn't see nor Wisner or Twedt after the crash, nor in prison or in the Dulag-Luft of Wetzlar. In my opinion, it's realistic to think that if Wisner or Twedt survived the crash, too, they should have been captured and put together with Olson. I think it didn't happen. But many eyewitnesses remember of more than one parachute: this is still one of the most difficult points in our research.
- Anderson report: no parachutes (wrong), two planes exploded in the air (possible, but still with no evidence), another one crashed (true)
- Anderson report: the third plane (Wisner) went into a deep spin and crashed (true, according to "my" eyewitnesses)
- Olson capture report: he was extracted from the plane (wrong, he said he parachuted himself)
- Twedt and Wisner died by the explosions/crashes (could be or not, no corps was apparently discovered or buried in the valley, at the crash A no one saw a body or his remains)

Now, the remains

#### THE REMAINS OF THE CRASH/ES

First of all, I will refer to three different crash-site in Sarntal:

- a) Garmisegg
- b) Aberstuekl/Sonvigo
- c) Pens/Pennes

Most of the pictures I send to you come from a), the two rims/wheels and the two Patronen (bullet) from a submachine gun are probably from c).

CRASH A)

Cylindrical container (for oxygen?) PICTURES Ae6 - Ae12

Two different pieces, it seems that there was no "middle" piece: the original container was simply cut into two different pieces.

Inscription at the top of the upper part of the container: T438585 (the first letter could be also F or even 7)

Width: 30 cm

High: 60 cm

One man said he saw other THREE similar containers by the a) crash-site.

The upper part has a circling black inscription with 8-10 letters.

Impossible to read it.

Other unidentified piece - PICTURES Ae10 - Ae11

Diameter: 15 cm

no inscriptions

\*\*\*\*\*

CRASH B) OR C)

Two rims - PICTURES Ae7 - Ae8 - Ae9

Diameter: 50 cm

Width: 35 cm

Inscription 1:

GOODYEAR USA 36 SG - 1043 - 1083B

MARSSLO

LBS CAP 7500

DH - HT

Inscription 2: (picture Ae9)

GOODYEAR USA 36 SG - ASS??DW?

G/43-5701B

LBS CAP 7500

HEAT NO. 1096H

Two bullets from a submachine gun (picture Ae9)

\*\*\*\*\*

This is what I collected last Friday.

All this objects were taken by locals from the places of the crashes.

Yesterday I went for the first time at Garmisegg (crash-site A) with some locals; we could find 20-30 different remains.

We have found a bone, too.

Animal or human? I will let it analyse by a pathologist.

I found many other pieces with perfect inscription, like a piece of gum with this number: 32P1727-7 (...) GS277 (the first 3 could be also 8)

- a bullet 14 cm long with the inscription LS4

- many gum-pipes with a "hole" of about 1,3 cm

- a rectangular piece of iron with the inscription 43A19880-L, then Us Army and something which ends in "tning"... as "lightning"

- another piece with many inscriptions like AIR FLOW, PAT NO. ???86 479 - FARP COMPANY TYPE 68AF-2, AN-F-30 etc.

You will receive the pictures of this second part of remains in the next days.

If I can do it without paying some billions, I'll give some pieces to a metal-restorer who could find out all the inscriptions, again. Eventually, yesterday I spoke with Cristoph Mair: he has found a piece of the crash-site c) but he didn't take any picture. I know that you, Diane, has already received an e-mail from him.

#### EYEWITNESSES REPORTS

I could tell you a lot about eyewitnesses, but I think we'd better wait for the results of my investigations, that means photos and ID numbers.

Now that's your turn...

For now, I can tell you that I've found 4-5 eyewitnesses between 60 and 95 (!) years. As always, there are some "perfect" informations and some new problems.

No one saw an explosion in the air, for instance.

Everyone believes that the P-38 of a) crashed without a pilot; no one saw his remains and the fighter went down complete out of control.

It was a very impressive crash, with an explosion and a fire which destroyed about 400 square metre of wooded hills at about 1300 metres, cutting into two pieces many trees. Now it's snowy and icy.

One eyewitness told me that there were 13-14 planes in group of 4 or 5: almost perfect, in fact there were 15! They were hit by the FLAK at Penserjoch/Passo Pennes, north of Sarentino.

Someone believes to have seen 4-5-6 parachutes, in different places. Two old men said to me, there were WHITE parachutes.

According to the Olson letter of 1952, it's impossibile that Olson and Wisner were captured together.

What else?

I think, that's enough.

I concentrated my reasearch in crash a), while Cristoph Mair believes the "right place" was crash-site c). Both possibilities could be right.

Waiting for your answer (Jim, please, come back home!!!) I'll send you the other pictures between Tuesday and Wednesday.

According to your investigations, I'll go further.

ciao  
Paolo

Ps: is the Pulitzer-prize only for Americans?!?  
-----

**Diana had her hands full answering the flurry of very substantive inputs from her agents in Italy. Both hardware and witnesses were being located and analytical validation needed to be done. Diana, performed like a professional diplomat, treading water, as she responded to Inga first, then to Paolo.**

**February 28, 2000**

Dear Inga,

Your findings are incredible, indeed. I am forwarding your email to all my contacts who can research the numbers and see if they match my uncle's plane. I wasn't able to get my home email working this weekend, and all my files are there, so I can't look them up and compare.

I just wish I could be there to go with you when you take the metal detector.

Does Jakob remember what happened to the bracelet? Did someone "official" come and take it away when they took the metal after the war? I am still wondering how the bracelet came back to the U.S. mortuary affairs. If the serial numbers match my uncle's plane, do you think we could find his gravesite?

Paolo Cagnan spent last Friday checking out a crash site at Garmisegg, one at Aberstueckl/Sonvigo (is that the same as yours?) and at Pens/Pennes. He took pictures and wrote down serial numbers, too, so we will undoubtedly find out whose planes were whose. I will forward his email to you and will copy yours to him (but I will respect your wishes and not include your email address). He has worked long and hard, too, and even though he's a reporter, he does want to get to the truth. I don't mind if he does a story, as long as we get the right answers, and it sounds like both of you have found them.

Did you get my email about your trip to the U.S.? I got a message back about one of my emails, but it was in German, and I didn't know what it meant. It could very well have been telling me that my message was not delivered. I will most certainly come to see you in San Francisco, if your schedule will permit it. My husband does a lot of business there, and we can arrange a business/pleasure trip for the time you'll be there. I owe you at least a dinner, but mostly I want to meet you.

I will await the results of our serial number search and write you as soon as I know something. I would also like to write to Mr. Weger and thank him for his help.

I think I may start sleeping again soon.

All my best,  
Diana

-----

**February 28, 2000**

Paolo, this is great work. You and Inga Hosp have both found some remarkable evidence. I'm excited to compare the serial numbers to those on my uncle's plane and on Olson's and Twedt's. I know some of them will match, most certainly, and I will await confirmation.

The photos came through very clearly, but none of it means anything to me. I couldn't get my home email set up over the weekend, so all my files are at home, and I can't check them for any matches until I get home tonight. I

need to look at some photos of P-38s to see if the wheels look like what you found.

I am going to send you a copy of Inga's email to me. She and Christoph visited one of the sites on Saturday (the names are a little different, but I think it's your site B). I am still respecting her wishes and not giving you her email address, but her message will be of interest to you. I think she is very suspicious of your motives in searching this story, so it may be difficult to make friends with her. However, I think you may have to join forces with her, and it will require the highest diplomacy. I want to stay friends with both of you, so I have to be like Switzerland in this case and stay completely neutral. I am grateful to both of you for your work, and I truly believe we wouldn't have come this far without two viewpoints. When I write my book about this incredible search, you both will play big parts.

Here is her letter: <Inga's letter of Feb. 28 >

Paolo, we're not there yet, but we're so close. I guess I'll start making plans to come to Italy soon. I'd like to see the place once we know for sure. Who knows? We might even be able to bring him home.

I don't know if I'll ever be able to thank you enough.

Diana  
-----

**Diana called for her support forces.**

**February 28, 2000**

Dick, Jim, and Bill, this is getting too exciting for words. I sent you Inga Hosp's message, and it looks like both she and Paolo are zeroing in.

What happens if/when we match the serial numbers to the wreckage? How do we go about finding the remains and identifying them for sure? I remember CIL getting involved in the Hoenshell search; do we get them involved once we have concrete evidence of the crash site? Does the government foot the bill to bring him home, if we can find the grave?

If the bracelet was separated from the body, that would explain the failure to identify any remains. I've asked Inga to find out from Jakob what happened to the bracelet -- was it taken away after the war, and if so, by whom?

What happens next? Should I be arranging to take some vacation time?

This all seems like a dream. I guess I shouldn't get too excited until we have confirmed serial numbers, but I have a feeling this is it.

Tell me, tell me, tell me! What do we do now?

Diana  
-----

**More from Inga.**

**February 28, 2000**

Gentlemen,

Because I don't have my email hooked up at home yet (we're missing some vital piece, and my husband has to chase it down), Inga was worried that I might not be getting her emails. I forwarded you Saturday's major find, but today she faxed me a follow-up from her trip this morning. She didn't email this one, only faxed it. I will scan the drawing and email it to you tomorrow. Perhaps its shape will tell you more. It looks like a big (1 meter) hair dryer to me.

Today's letter is short, so I'll transcribe it here: (Diana)

Dear Diana,

I was in Sarntal again this morning, taking photographs, talking to people. Another 70 year old man at Aberstuckl confirmed to me the 3 Lightning crashes at the places mentioned in the German reports from Mr. Grimminger. He also has seen the captured pilot pass by his home on his accompanied way down to the street. He also knows that one plane crashed near Pluner farm. Then I went again to talk to Jakob Weger (Pluner). He confirmed everything he mentioned on Saturday. I took photographs of him, holding the metal saw, and I took photographs of the large piece, too. On the opposite side of the valley I met another Eye-witness, also a 70 year old man who saw the crash as well as the burnt corpse which he confirmed being buried at the crash site. To be sure that you got my message from Saturday and my poor drawing of the large piece, I send all this again by Telefax.

Best regards, until soon  
Kindly,  
Inga

---

**Inga was exchanging frequent messages with Diana and indicated that the Hosp family was planning a vacation trip to Canada and the west coast of the U.S.**

**February 28, 2000**

Dear Diana,

Thanks for your message. - And thank you, too, for offering to come to San Francisco next summer. But please don't feel disturbed (perhaps our travelling period during holiday time does not match very well with your husband's working period), and you don't owe me nothing at all. San Francisco is scheduled between Aug. 31 and Sept. 4. From there we will return to Europe. But I would certainly like very much to meet you. -

Yes, Jakob mentioned that the Carabinieri who came to look after the

remains, accompanied by that Italian merchant of used metals, took away the bracelet. So it could very well have been sent to American officials - and gathered at the U.S. mausoleum in Germany. But I don't want to speculate too much. I cling to the facts, and I only give to you what I was told. By now you should also have my second message (by Fax) about what I did today. And this is at least a confirmation for the Lightning crash above Jakob's farm. As I told you, we could try to find the gravesite after the snow will have melted away.

I would really propose not to give my last results to Cagnan at once. He should do his research by his own - this should enforce our chance to find the truth; I mean results, which are confirmed by independent research! I know that he was at Garmisegg (it is the home of Christoph's grandmother), but Garmisegg (also called Urstettberg) is mentioned as crash site of a bomber! At Aberstückl I was today, as I wrote you. (Aberstückl is the native name, Sonvigo is the same village, only the Italian translation, invented - like thousands - during the Twenties, to make a historic marginalia.).

As soon we have confirmation by the numbers or something else, I will give you Jakob's address.

Good night, Diana, and best regards!  
Inga

## CHAPTER 12 -- THE BULGARIAN TRAVELER

**Bill Mays, the 'Bulgarian Traveler', was an American businessman working in Sophia. He was instrumental in locating the crash site of Carl Hoenshell. He had been following the Wisner search and sensed that it was approaching the climax of precisely locating the crash site, so he jumped in with some guidance for getting the U. S. government agencies involved for site examination and exhumation. He worked very closely with Liz Wilson, Hoenshell's niece in the final stages of her search.**

**(Apparently he sent a blind copy to Mr. David Roath of the mortuary affairs unit with whom he worked on the Hoenshell case)**

**February 29, 2000**

Hi Diana,

I've taken the liberty to forward the last email, pictures, and a brief description to the mortuary affairs office (sorry David Roath I forgot your title ), at the European Command hqtrrs in Frankfurt and also the office in charge of any potential excavation. The person who came to Bulgaria from EU Command name is David Roath and he was instrumental in the excavation of LT. Hoenshell. EU Command is who actually orders an excavation and sometimes they use a CILHI (Central Investigations Laboratory Hawaii) team to do them...but not always. It's the EU Command's decision so we should begin there. It will also help to be prepared to write your favorite congressperson(s), and find out who is the US Ambassador to Italy. They also enjoy feel-good PR missions like these.

I'll compile the information we have and it is important not to disturb things too much at the crash site...especially a burial site!!! My advice is that once we determine with a very high probability that this is your uncle's crash site from evidence and witness testimony, David Roath and/or a team will go to the site themselves to do an "official" military investigation as to the likelihood of recovering the bodily remains of a US military vet, hopefully your uncle.

If he concludes that the probability is high after his visit to the area, then they will most likely order an excavation. I should tell you that the time from when we determine this is your uncle's site to the time an excavation crew would be there...assuming all what I previously mentioned...is probably 2 years or so.

David is a great guy, very fair and super to work with. We should get some good evidence from witnesses as to the time and exact location of the crash site and provide all of this information to him, as well as, the locations in the MACR's Jim has that are the official US military guide to this crash. This will reduce Mr. Roath's investigative time needed and shorten the overall time. I'll also ask Liz Wilson [ Ed. note: Carl Hoenshell's niece] to provide some additional insight as to the steps she took, phone calls she made, and letters she wrote to get the ball rolling. [...in the search for her uncle] Liz & EU Command also have the entire parts manual for a P-38, so what we need are pictures with the corresponding serial numbers. A serial number off a machine gun or an engine block part are very good identifiers. I called the EU Command office and they could not positively ID any of the parts, so we need more pictures and more serial numbers. Liz emailed me back and said the wheel was from a P-38 or P-51 by sight, but will have Colin look it up in the book to be sure.

David, some irony and coincidence to "our" last mission...Ms. Diana Dale is the niece of a US Army Air Corps pilot named 2LT William Wisner. Some details are as follows and in the attached file:

NAME 2nd Lt. William O. Wisner 0-798778  
DOWNING Oct. 20, 1944  
WHERE Bolzano, Italy  
MISSION Regensburg, Germany escort mission 15 aircraft  
HOME TOWN Dallas Texas  
AIRCRAFT NAME Golden Slipper not sure he was flying his aircraft  
NIECE Diana Dale 15 Corona St. Denver CO 80218  
EMAIL dtdale@ku.alum.org  
daled@rockymountainnews.com  
OTHER PLANES Lt. Olson Lt. Lowell Tweed 2nd. Lt. Jack C. Anderson  
0-821114 element leader Capt, Elliot  
CEMETERY Mirandola Italy GRAVE 37?  
POSSIBLE REMAINS X-70035 at Griesheim/Main mausoleum CIL 5034  
BRACELET found and returned to Quartermaster General on Aug 10, 1954 CIL-5034  
- (file lost)  
SQUADRON LEADER Myron Hutchens Colorado Springs CO

I'm traveling to Stuttgart tomorrow afternoon, Wednesday, 1 March 2000 for 5 days and I'm not certain I will have email access, but I will have my mobile

phone. My number is as follows. (xxx) Look forward to hearing from you. Take care and all the Best.

Bill Mays  
-----

**Bill's preemptory communication with the U.S. mortuary affairs people in Europe was a good entrée to their attention if & when the Wisner crash site was precisely located and substantiated. Diana received some more timely data that she felt Bill ought to know and pass along.**

**February 29, 2000**

Bill, thank you so much for telling me what to expect with the investigation. I will write a letter to my congresswoman post haste.

I hope you get this before you leave for your trip tomorrow. I got two very important pieces of mail yesterday -- one was Lowell Twedt's IDPF, and the other was a letter from Mr. Hans Grimminger, an air war historian in Augsburg, Germany. Grimminger was the contact that got Inga Hosp on the right track to the crash site.

His letter cites four crash sites on 20.10.44, as follows:

North slope of the Kirchberg at Aberstueckl (Sonvigo), north of Sartthein (Sarentino) in the Sarntal (Valle de Sarentina), by 1. +3. +4. Batterie/schwere Flakabteilung 490; 4./schw. Flakabtl. 547; 1. +3./schw.Flakabtl. 548.

Messner Basai, 9-10 Km north of sartnthein (Sarentino), by 3. Batterie/schw. Flakabtl. 490; 1.\_3./schw. Flakabtl. 548.

East of Rabenstein (Corvara), Blunabachtal, 10 Km north of Sarnthein, by 1. +3. Batterie/schw. Flakabtl. 548; 3./schw. Flakabtl. 490.

Kesselberg (Monte Catino), east of Meran (Merano), but 3. Batterie/schw. Flakabtl. 490; 1. +3./schw. Flakabt. 548.

Bill, I don't know what the numbers mean; I suspect they have something to do with which gun hit which target. At any rate, these locations came from the German Bundesarchiv, and Grimminger insists they are not wrong. The first one is the one we're assuming is my uncle's, but until we match some serial numbers, we can't be sure.

Lowell Twedt's IDPF indicates he had a son named William L. Twedt. There are only two William Twedts listed on the Internet, so I've left messages with both of them. If one of them is the right one, we may be able to put two to rest with one investigation.

Have a good trip.

Diana  
-----

## CHAPTER 13 -- SORTING THE FLAK & THE CHAFF

Mr. Grimminger's flak battery information was probably the most definitive data received from any source in the search. The data described the detail of location for the three aircraft in the incident, plus one more crash in the Merano area to the west of the Sarntal region. The German flak unit reports were considered highly reliable.

The tasks ahead were primarily, authentication of hardware items as P-38 artifacts, and identification of local residents familiar with the locations described in the flak reports and hopefully who were in the area at the time and with some recall of the event. At Bill Mays' suggestion, Diana also wrote letters to her congress-person and to the U.S. ambassador to Italy to make them aware of the search effort in case their influence might be needed to authorize an official recovery effort.

Paolo's hardware artifacts were wheels, pressure tank pieces, gun parts/shells, etc. The odd shaped part recovered by Christoph and Inga at the Pluner farm needed further description. Authentication of the pieces required some P-38 hardware expertise. The part recovered at the Pluner farm had its recovery location most precisely identified.

**Jim re-entered the whirlwind that Diana had been skillfully managing.**

**March 2, 2000**

Hi Diana--

Got home tonight & collected 20# mail, 18 recorded telecons, & 93 email messages! You've been on a real merry-go-round, almost started a war, made peace & setup a Wisner NATO! I feel like I've just walked into the final chapter of an epic movie!

Tomorrow I'll have to sort through your messages & see what my homework is. I just hope the hoards of investigators swarming over the Sarn valley & hills don't meddle so much with the evidence that the Euro-CIL can't put the puzzle back together.

You've been through the wringer--tell me your first order of business.

Jim  
-----

**Diana welcomed the added support and introduced Jim to the art of diplomacy.**

**March 3, 2000**

Hooray!!! I'm so glad you're back!

I just sent you a copy of Inga's latest. Looks like Paolo is still barking up the wrong tree, and I'll set him straight. But from the tone of Inga's letter, I won't forward it to him verbatim. She's still very hostile to the idea that a reporter might be investigating for other than altruistic reasons. And I still don't care, as long as we get the truth.

I don't know what the first order of business is. There's been so much going on, I've almost lost track. I get the idea from Bill Mays last email that EU Command has been notified that we've possibly hit paydirt, so I assume we're waiting for confirmation on some part numbers before they do an investigation. Perhaps when Bill gets back to home base we'll know more.

Lowell Twedt's IDPF finally came, and I found his son (another Bill). He's a keno dealer (actually higher up than that, but I don't know what else to call him) in Reno, NV. He doesn't have email, but his son does, so I've opened that channel of communication. The IDPF doesn't provide any more information than my uncle's does -- in fact, even less, because there was nothing of his found after the crash. Bill Twedt was under the impression that Lowell had vanished without a trace. His grandmother, like mine, never gave up hope that he'd be returned, so I guess I'm doing this for two mothers of pilots now. Bill was six when his father died, so he doesn't remember him much at all. Lowell was in the service all along, so he was gone more than he was home.

That's all for now. I don't want to add to your mountain of email. Once you wade through it, give me your take on where we are. Inga did a drawing of the piece she found with the serial number on it and faxed it to me. Jack and I are in process of getting a better piece of scanner software, so I haven't been able to scan it for you. I also got a nice long letter from Mr. Grimminger, the airwar historian in Augsburg, Germany. I haven't been able to scan that, either. It's so long that with my old scanning software the files would be too huge to cope with. He also provided a very detailed map of the area with the sites marked. I should be able to get those to you Monday.

Again, I'm glad you're back -- the ship has a rudder again.

D

---

**Inga added more substance to the location debate. Mr. Grimminger's detailed map was going to add the framework on which to resolve the debate.**

**March 3, 2000**

Dear Diana,

concerning the crashsite near Garmesegg - i.e. the place where our reporter is searching for a Lightning - I have another confirmation that he is wrong. I knew already from several sources and eye-witnesses that it was a BOMBER which crashed near Garmesegg above Astfeld. Now Keith Bullock, whom I asked as a bomber crash expert, was helpful again: He has sent to me a letter by another eye witness of the Garmesegg crash which was a BOMBER, was in April 1945 and from which 9 men could escape with parachutes. I called this man and got exactly the same information. As I wrote to you recently I had the same story by an eye witness at Aberstückl, also the 9 parachutes.

Now I am looking forward to have revealed the numbers found by Christoph

and me - and I am glad that I am, for the second time, able to help our reporter while he is jubilating on a wrong track. I would call this cooperation.

Again: It was a BOMBER which crashed at Garmesegg (reporter's site a). It was a bomber which crashed at Weißenbach near Pens (his site c?). And there were 3 Lightnings to crash near Aberstückl ("his" site b which is Christoph's and my only site, confirmed by German Flak-Reports and by the diary of my German Flak-member).

Next week I'll be mostly present (except Monday when I have to go to Munich), if Mr. Mays wants to get in contact.

Sorry, I am not able to open the pictures belonging to your last message. Have to upgrade my RAM. Damned computers! They never can get enough.

Best regards  
Inga

---

**Paolo continued to vigorously pursue his leads and to add more hardware items to the puzzle. He forwarded photos of hardware items he had encountered as he contacted various individuals who possessed them or knew of their existence. Specific sources and/or locations of discovery were not very precisely defined. In many cases there were part numbers showing----but were they from a P-38? Some informed expertise was needed to lend any real significance to the objects.**

**March 3, 2000**

Bolzano, Friday 3rd, 10 pm

Greetings all.

Always awaiting with great suspense your confirmations, here are some News from my "investigation agency".

- in attach I send you the picture with the inscriptions (Ae18) of one of the metallic pieces (Ae17) we discovered some days ago at Garmisegg, crash-site a). An expert could let almost the whole inscription re-emerge; only some numbers are not easily legible. I hope you can read it, but in every case I will give you a description of the inscriptions I could read, so that you can receive an indirect confirmation of what you personally can see.

It should be part of an engine, 'cause it's written "CARBURETOR". Hey Bill, you were looking for some engine parts, weren't you?!?  
On the left side there is a vertical inscription: "AIR FLOW" contained into an arrow which goes up. Then it's written "PAT NO. 2.286.479"  
Then we have six lines which are, from the top to the bottom:  
(I will underline the not legible numbers or words)

F??TER CARBURETOR AIR  
SPECIFICATION NO. AN-F-30  
TYPE ??????????????  
MFGR'S PART NO. 32P-1457  
CONTR. NO. H535 AC 40033  
FARR COMPANY - TYPE 68AF-2

This object it's still in my possession for further investigations, if needed.

- Next Monday I'll receive the answer from another expert, who is still examining another remain which has a lot of inscriptions. It will cost me quite a lot, but I hope it will be worthy.

- Diane, I know an air/war expert. If you had received the pictures that Inga should have taken from the remain she has founded near Aberstuckl/Sonvigo, please send it to me and I will let it examine,too.

- Yesterday I went to Sarntal and came back with some positive results. Now I'm quite sure about the three different crash-sites. One is at Garmisegg, another near Penserjoch/Passo Pennes, the last at Kirchberg near Aberstuckl/Sonvigo. It won't be possible to reach the second and the third crash-sites until May or June, because of ice and snow. No paths are reachable. In theory. If I'd received a confirmation of the serial numbers, I'll try to go there, without caring about the risks. So, it's up to you. Diane, I'd really like to see the map you've received from Mr. Grimminger, to check out if his locations are the same of mine. In case, you could fax the map (to) my fax at the newspaper.

- I spoke to the farmer who still has the two wheels and who could "find" the machine-gun. He told me, he will try to get some photos or the serial numbers. In this case, I only have to wait and hope. Yesterday he gave to me another bullet, which calibre - I let it examine by another expert... - is .50 US Browning M2 which has a cartridge of 99,2 mm and a calibre of 12,96 mm. I checked a war-book: this is the calibre used by the P-38s, but also by many other WWII planes. According to "my" expert, it comes from a machine-gun called Mod. Brownig M2 or, in another version, M2 HB (Heavy Barrel). In attach you will receive a sketch, so that someone could tell me if it's the right one. In this case, I'll show the sketch to the farmer, hoping he'll recognize it. He said that once in 1944 there were found more than 100 bullets: every five of them, there was a tracer bullet.

- another important information from this farmer: he can remember a tank, which was about 2,5 - 3 meter long. It was founded next to the crash-site in Penserjoch and it wasn't the only one. His uncle used it for many years as a bathtub... It was made by zincate steel. No way to find it at present... It could be one of the typical dropping tank of P-38's.

ciao  
Paolo

---

**Diplomatically, Diana threaded her way through the findings and assumptions from Paolo and Inga. She let Paolo know of the differences in opinion and sought other views.**

**March 3, 2000**

Paolo, I'll be able to scan the map and send it to you Monday or Tuesday. A fax won't be detailed enough. Same with the image Inga sent me. She drew a rough sketch of a part at Aberstueckl. I haven't received any photos from

her yet.

I'm confirming some information Inga just gave me about Garmisegg and Penserjoch. She thinks they were bomber crashes, not P-38s at those two locations. Her information comes from a British air war historian who lives in Austria, and I'm emailing him now to confirm that information. You may want to hold off on spending any more money on restoring the parts from those two sites until I verify that information.

Your photos came through beautifully, and it looks like a good find, anyway. I'll let you know after I hear from Keith Bullock about those two sites.  
Diana

---

**The search action was moving at a fierce pace & Jim had to quickly come up to speed after his two week absence. He had to put over 100 past emails into perspective and to phase in the current flood of messages.**

**March 3, 2000**

Hi Diana--

I haven't surrounded the whole plot yet, but I think the competitive frenzy is getting out of hand. .... & I think that we need to slow down the action to keep from contaminating the possible evidence.

I will reply to him (Paolo) congratulating him on the great photos & tell him I will proceed to work with P-38 knowledgeable people to identify what we can. Over the weekend I will read & stitch together the info created while I've been out of the loop. I want to figure out how to jump on this fast moving roller coaster without upsetting things.

I am very interested in seeing your map data & the message from Mr. Grimminger. I am also interested in knowing Keith Bullock's participation. When I wrote him a while back, he said he had no time to deal with our search as he was only interested in bomber crash sites.

I think I will also go back to Peter Righi to ask for the Sarnvalley tourist data he promised a while back. It may help to put the hand drawn map data in perspective.

Jim

---

**One of the first tasks Jim concentrated on was to seek some expertise to identify and authenticate the hardware found in the Sarntal region. He had a real active expert in mind. Bob Cardin was reconstructing the 'Glacier Girl', a P-38 recovered from the ice flows of Greenland. It was one of the 1st Fighter Group aircraft lost during the flight to Europe as part of Operation Bolero in 1942.**

**March 4, 2000**

Hi Bob--

You were a guest speaker at our 1st Fighter Association a while back. You also may recall that you assisted us in identifying the P-38 nose

strut recovered from Carl Hoenshell's crash site in Bulgaria.

Could we send you a few email pix of some aircraft parts we have recovered from another crash site near Bolzano, Italy in hopes of identifying them as P-38 parts? Our current search is for the crash site of Bill Wisner, a 1st Ftr. Group pilot who was lost on a mission on October 20, 1944. Three P-38's went down in a combination flak & collision incident. We are conducting the search at the request of Bill's niece, Diana Dale.

Thank you for your consideration,

Best regards,  
Jim Graham

---

**Bright & early Monday morning Bob emailed that he would be happy to help out, so Jim fired off a set of photos of Paolo's hardware finds. Bob messaged back the tentative identification of several wheel & tank parts as likely P-38 parts. Jim FAXed Bob the sketch of the large part that Inga & Christoph had retrieved at the Weger farm. Bob came back with a guess that it was the supercharger housing of a P-38. He wanted a photo of the part to make a more positive identification. That would take awhile to have Inga obtain & mail as she didn't have a scanner at the time. So on to other tasks.**

**Jim dispatched a couple of messages to the search crews in Italy to assure them that the U. S. contingent was reading their mail and to move toward an orderly sorting of the data gathered. More to the point---to let Jim & Diana get organized!**

**March 5, 2000**

Hi Paolo--

I could hardly wait to get back online & see what had happened in our search. You certainly have been busy and with lots of information to provide. Your photos are excellent. I am contacting several sources I know with access to P-38 drawings and part information. I will provide them with your photos and the inscription information. I have the messages out, so we'll see if I hear from them this week. The best sources are busy people, so they may not be too quick to respond.

I am anxious to get a good map of the detailed locations for the crashes that you have identified. We know that 3 P-38's crashed in the region that day & our problem will be to determine if the crash sites you have found are of P-38's and if so, which site is which. I doubt very much that any 2 of our P-38's would have crashed very close to each other, even though they all started down from the same point in the sky. In your opinion, do you think that the three sites you have identified could be each of the three airplanes we are interested in? Since Olson survived, we are not quite as interested in his crash site as for the Wisner & Twedt airplanes.

For each of the three P-38's we have the unique serial numbers for the airplane itself, the two engines, and all of their 50 caliber machine guns and their 20 mm cannons. Of course, if we could find any of those, we would be absolutely sure of the plane's identity. Part #'s on other parts will determine if they came from a P-38, but not which one. Each P-38

had two engines, four 50 caliber machine guns and one 20 mm cannon.

It is important that the precise location & situation of each part you find should be marked or accurately noted, because if we do determine the site is one of the P-38's we are looking for, the US Army team which would seek permission to examine the site, would want to know all the detailed information they could get. In particular, if any human body parts are located, they should be left in the place found so that they don't have the forensic evidence contaminated.

Bill May, who is an American working in Bulgaria and a very great help in our search there last year for another pilot, is travelling to Stuttgart this week and hopes to get down to the Bolzano area on his return. We hope he can contact you to discuss your findings. He worked with the US Army team members in Bulgaria to excavate remains of our pilot & plane there, so he is very knowledgeable on how they go about it.

We sure appreciate all of your effort in our search and hope it all turns out successful for all of us. Maybe we can all have a gathering near the crash site(s) to get to know each other in person and to celebrate the efforts of everyone that has helped. The Wisner & Twedt families will be very grateful if we can successfully locate the crash sites & remains of there long lost relatives.

In the meantime, we've still got lots to do to get to that point. It may take a year or more to piece it all together, so we need to be patient & careful not to overlook something or to jump to false conclusions. I'm glad to be back online & help out.

We hope you will let all of the local people who have offered information know that we are very appreciative of their interest and there time in supporting the search. Your story should certainly include that thought. We think that many new friendships result from these team efforts.

We're standing by for new developments. Let us know the questions you need answered to aid the search.

Best regards,

Jim  
-----

**After reviewing all of the email messages that exploded during the two weeks of his absence, Jim decided that things needed to be sorted out for clarity and significance---at least for his own understanding.**

**March 8, 2000**

Subject: Stop the music

Hi everyone--

I think it may be time for all of us to 'stop the music' & sort this 'dance' out!  
I can't speak for Diana, but my head is swimming with various names of

places (& over there in the Tyrol, places each seem to have at least two names) and more crash sites than the airplanes we are looking for.

The map from Mr. Grimminger is a good place to start sorting things out. If each of you has one, I would suggest that you draw a grid of lines on it at 1 cm intervals. I started at the upper left hand corner. I drew horizontal lines and numbered them #1 through #25 with the line at the top border being #0. Then I drew vertical lines and lettered them A through S with the 'A' line spaced 1 cm from the left edge of the map image. With this grid I find Aberstuckl to be almost directly on the 9G intersection. From Mr. Grimminger, the map is a 1:200,000 scale, therefore 1 cm on the map is equal to 2 km (100,000 cm= 1 km).

We seem to have four sites identified in Mr. Grimminger's letter:

- #1 North slope of the Kirchberg at Aberstuckl (near map grid 9G)
- #2 Messner Basai, 9-10 Km North of Sarntheim  
(can't find, but must be close to 8H or 9H on the map grid)
- #3 East of Rabenstein (near map grid 8H or 8I)
- #4 Kesselberg (Monte Catino) (near map grid 11F or 11G)

We know only 3 P-38's crashed in the area about 11:30 on the morning of October 20, 1944. Yes, there were 4 P-38's in trouble, but we know that Capt. Elliott was able to make it safely to Ancona. It is my opinion that the Flakgruppe reports may not have realized that Elliott's plane did not actually crash. Mr. Grimminger's #2 & #3 sites may be one and the same as far as actual crashes are concerned. It looks like sites 1, 3 & 4 are within a circle about 10 km in diameter with the center at Aberstuckl.

Paolo, you have talked of crash sites at Garmisegg and Penserjoch. I can find Penser Joch at map grid of about 4K, but I can't locate Garmisegg. Can you give us the map grid for it? Penser Joch looks like about 12 km from Aberstuckl.

Could we all check out the locations we have been talking about and reply with any corrections to my assumptions or recommendations to make our messages better understood?

---

To answer some of your questions, Paolo:

When Bob Cardin said 'not positive' about photo Ae11, he meant that he can't be sure of his guess that the ring is the reduction gear from the nose of an Allison engine (which P-38's had), but he believes it could be. We must understand that there are no full size paper drawings for the P-38 anymore & that Bob probably just has microfilmed drawings & parts lists. He is much too busy a man to thoroughly search through all of the microfilmed records, so he is basing his judgements on his experience in fully restoring the 'Glacier Girl' P-38 which crash landed in Greenland in 1942.

As for the 'later report': With the mission reports of the 1st FG, there is a supplementary report written by a pilot of a bomber in the 463rd BG which was flying east of the Bolzano area at the time of the P-38 crash incident. They were on their way to a Regensburg target. As in the letter from Mr. Grimminger, the 1st FG & 82nd FG (92 P-38's) were

assigned to support the B-17's of the 99th BG & 463rd BG. I know from the 1st FG mission plan that they expected to rendezvous with the bombers in the Innsbruck area. The 99th BG may have been ahead of the 463rd BG as the 1st FG P-38's, flying much faster than the bombers would have caught up to them shortly after passing the Bolzano area. The 82nd FG may have been assigned to eventually catch the 463rd BG for their cover, but I don't have records for the 82nd FG. In any case, the bomber groups would be probably East of the Bolzano area to avoid the heavy flak concentration.

The observation of the bomber pilot was stated as follows by the report:  
"On October 20, 1944, five miles northeast of Bolzano at 1115 hours, 3 P-38's were lost due to a mid-air collision. Lt. Knapp, pilot of a B-17, (772nd BS, 463rd BG) reports two chutes were seen to open below the wreckage, from a distance. The incident was originally reported as a B-24 blowing up, but further interrogation reveals that Lt. Knapp did not identify the explosion as any type of aircraft but the observation of the falling wreckage and the two chutes was the approximate time of the collision of the 3 P-38's."

As you see, the report is "from a distance" & a report of a very busy pilot. The report only suggests the possibility of two chutes. A good friend of mine who is now dead, has said in a letter to Bill Wisner's family that he was on the October 20 mission & after the collision he followed one of the spiralling planes down until it crashed. He believed it was Bill Wisner's plane & he said that he did not see the pilot bail out. We don't know much of what Twedt's plane did on the way to the ground. We do know that Olson bailed out & was slightly injured & went to Stalag 7A.

I can't recall the parachute colors---I never used one, but I think they were white as there were lots of scarfs made from the used/damaged ones.

I agree with you that we must eventually put together a file of all of the significant findings of our search for the EU Command. They want very well substantiated information though and not our speculations. I put together about a 150 page report that I sent to them for the Hoenshell search which Bill Mays worked on in Bulgaria. I have all of the mission reports, MACR's and between Diana and myself, the various family & government reports dealing with Bill Wisner's case. We need to carefully identify the various witnesses that have told you & Mair & Inga their stories and to carefully document the location of recovered plane parts as well as to get the witnesses to define as closely as possible where they believe any burial sites may have been. Certainly if there is a hidden machine gun somewhere there, it would be very helpful in determining which crash site was which.

I hope I have answered some of the open questions.....  
I will await your answers & recommendations.

Good night all---

Jim  
-----

Mr. Grimminger's map was of an ideal scale to put the overall territory of the search into a good visual perspective. It covered Bolzano, Ritten and the entire Sarntal region. Inga helped out with a map of the Sarn Valley that detailed the potential crash areas to a much finer resolution (6 times better). She also sent photos of the large hardware piece that she had sketched earlier. The photos were forwarded to Bob Cardin to analyze. Bob came back with a resounding confirmation that the piece was a P-38 turbo supercharger housing!

The map that Inga FAXed, with its great detail at roughly 1/4 mile to the inch, showed the elevations, streams, roads and villages that allowed reasonable estimates of the crash locations which Mr. Grimminger had described to be within about 3 miles of each other. The supercharger housing was found on the Pluner farm on a hillside near a rushing creek some 3/4 mile to the East of the valley road.

The team now had a site that was closely associated with verified P-38 hardware and a resident who recalled the crash. It was about time to call in the U.S. Army mortuary affairs agency to officially locate and examine the true crash site. The big question remained--was it the crash site for Wisner or Twedt? The Olson crash site was one of the two identified by Mr. Grimminger to the southwest about 2 to 3 miles.

Diana was elated.

**March 9, 2000**

Inga, you and Mair did it! By now you probably have received the email from Bob Cardin (forwarded by Jim) that confirms the part you found is from a P-38. That's exactly what we needed to get EU Command onto the trail. Thank you SO much!

I wish I knew what will happen next. I guess we wait for the snow to thaw so the investigators can go in and figure out who crashed where. However, the story of the ID bracelet makes me hope against hope that my uncle fell onto Jakob's land, because I'm sure Jakob will protect the site. (Did you enjoy Bob's comment about the third picture? It was the one of Jakob holding the saw.) Please thank him for me and ask him to hold the part until the U.S. authorities can get a look at it. I have no idea when that will be or what that will entail, but I'm sure we'll find out soon enough. Of course, once the government gets involved, things will move a lot more slowly.

In the meantime, if you or Christoph or Jakob need anything from me, please let me know.

With enormous gratitude,

Diana

---

**\* SEE FIGURE 5 -- P-38 SUPERCHARGER  
(FOUND BY CHRISTOPH AND INGA AT THE PLUNER FARM)**

**CHAPTER 14 -- CALL IN THE ARMY**

**In Bolzano, Paolo was sensing the closure of the search. He released a series of articles in his Alto Adige newspaper describing the search saga. They received front page coverage. The articles created new contacts that Paolo interviewed about the triple crash in 1944. More parts were found and more witnesses gave stories of the crashes on the mountain west of Aberstuckl. These corresponded to two of the crashes outlined by Mr. Grimminger that were west of the valley roadway. An engine distributor was confirmed as a likely P-38 engine part by Bob Cardin. The reports via email from Italy were coming rapidly---about 10 to 15 a day. It was time to organize data to submit to the U.S. government authorities. Bill Mays, the team member in Bulgaria who was instrumental in the Hoenshell search, decided it was time to contact the U.S. Army mortuary affairs agency that he had worked with on that case to cue them to the Wisner search team progress. He sent along some photos of P-38 parts recovered to reinforce the legitimacy of the Wisner case.**

**March 10, 2000**

Subject: EU Command info

Hi All,

The only things to date I've emailed to EUC are Paolo's photographs w/descriptions, and a verbal and written summary of who we are searching for, where, and the irony of another niece heading up a search for her Uncle.

We know it takes time for them to go through their official protocols for opening a case, ordering information, getting it to Germany, and whatnot. I told them we seem to have it narrowed to 3-4 possible locations due to eyewitness testimony and are searching for P-38 wreckage to coincide. They're ordering info from archives on Wisner and Twedt and I they are going to work on locating the "missing" CIL file.

That's all I've given them to this point since that's all we really have at the moment. I don't want to bombard them with all of our emails...only pictures, descriptions, and relevant testimony...JUST THE FACTS. :o) I feel the best way is what worked before. Figure it out ourselves through process of elimination, package our findings, and put it in their hands with additional letters from Congress persons.

I'll be away the next few days with a management retreat of sorts :o( I hate these things.....

All the Best,

Bill

---

**Then, to Mark of the EU Command,who was on the Hoenshell case--**

**March 14, 2000**

From: Bill Mays  
To: Mark Baldwin

Subject: Wisner - Part Photo - turbocharger

Hi Mark, All,

Well, here's another photo sample of what was found at a farm near Aberstueckl, Italy. Bob Cardin identified this part. He is a gentleman doing the "Glacier Girl" restoration in Kentucky. He was very helpful in helping us determine that we found the strut tube here in Bulgaria and in visually identifying P-38 parts. Easier for him since he has a P-38 in pieces in his garage. Here's the email and attached photos of what we believe to be a turbocharger found at the crashsite mentioned above. The crash occurred on 20 Oct. 1944 near Bolzano, Italy.

Diana will be introducing herself to you all very soon if she already hasn't. I believe you already know of the other "characters" :o) of the Carl's Squadron CC'd to this email: Jim Graham, Dick Kahler, Ralph Morgan, and Steve Duncan. The locals on the ground doing the real work are Paolo Cagnan; Mair Christoph; Dr. Inga Hosp. They have donated their time and efforts to helping find Lt. Wisner and are providing the photographs and testimony(s). Eventually, they will be the ones you meet when you visit the sight. (Forward looking statement, I know!) Below is part of the email I received from Diana Dale, the niece of Lt. Wisner.

---

"To refresh your memory (Bill), this site (Plunerbach farm) is of most interest to me because the farmer remembers the crash and remembers seeing an ID bracelet from the dead (and badly burned) pilot with two W's on it. The pilot was buried on site, the wreckage and ID bracelet were removed by the Carabinieri, and as far as the farmer knows, the pilot is still buried there.

Plunerpart1 & Plunerpart2 description below:

Inga Hosp sent me a packet of photos of the Sarntal and a piece of wreckage. Here are two views of the part she found at Aberstueckl and had drawn for us before. I hope it rings a bell. To refresh memory, here are the numbers on it: W 8438920 FD C 8621 H H (or K) 8. According to Inga,---  
"There were other numbers on another place on the same piece, a kind of scale 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 with other numbers in between these numbers, each three lined off with an elliptic shape."

The last photo is a gentleman, Jakob, who made a saw blade from another part of the aircraft. It's not really identifiable, but interesting none-the-less. Please let me know that you received this email and attached photos at your earliest convenience.

If there is anything else we can provide for you guys in Germany please let me know. Any luck finding the Missing CIL file on Lt. Wisner?

Meanwhile, we're still digging. Take care!  
Bill Mays

---

**The next day, Bill Mays was contacted by the U.S. Army 21TSC and was told that the Agency had already requested the files and documents associated with both Wisner and Twedt. They expected that the data would be received through the official government channels within about two months.**

**Diana had already obtained the Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) on Twedt and found that he had a son. She searched the directories available on the Internet and found a person with the same name in Nevada. She called and found that, indeed, he was that son of Lowell Twedt. Diana told him of our search and inquired whether or not the family wished to further pursue the crash site & potential remains of Lowell. He concurred that closure of his father's 'missing' status was desirable and agreed to provide other data if needed.**

**The task of the search team now, was to organize data to submit to the 21TSC for a full scope recovery effort for Wisner & Twedt. Correlation of witnesses, testimonies, hardware, and precise locations was a difficult task due to the intensity, sequence and volume of email transacted since the start of the search in January. Jim prepared an annotated grid for the maps sent by Mr. Grimminger and Inga. He conducted a round of messaging between the search team members using the gridded map as a common reference for each team member to relate contacts, discoveries and opinions.**

**With concurrence from Diana, Jim started to assemble a document of evidence to send to the 21TSC in Frankfurt, Germany. Many more email messages occurred before it was completed on April 14, 2000. The document was comprised of 139 pages of data and was accompanied by a cover letter describing its contents and organization.**

**April 14, 2000**

To: David Roath  
Mark Baldwin

USAMAA-E  
LRMC, CMR 402  
APO, AE 09180

Subject: Wisner/Twedt Search

Gentlemen,

Thanks for giving us the opportunity to submit this data package to you. The Wisner and Twedt families have been searching for closure in the loss of their kin William O. Wisner (USAAF 2nd Lt. - O-708778) and Lowell S. Twedt (USAAF 2nd Lt. - O-806552) for over 55 years, so it is with great anticipation that they put this challenge in your hands.

The search was initiated in May 1998 by Ms. Diana Dale, niece of Lt. Wisner, in hopes of solving the painful mystery that surrounded the loss of her uncle in the crash of his P-38 near Bolzano, Italy on October 20, 1944. A driving factor was the advancing age of her mother, Mrs. Maxine Wisner Thompson, who is now 82.

Ms. Dale enlisted my aid in tracking down the site and circumstances of her uncle's crash via a notice posted on an Internet bulletin board in May 1998. I was contacted about that notice in February 1999 since I was then the president of the 71st Fighter Squadron section of the 1st Fighter Association. I had had some very stimulating and gratifying experience in helping to search for the crash site and remains of Lt. Carl Hoenshell, also of the 1st FG/71st FS (of which you both are familiar), so I have been very eager to assist Ms. Dale & her family.

The October 20, 1944 incident in which Lt. Wisner was lost, also claimed

Lt. Twedt. Our search for Lt. Wisner's crash site inevitably included the search for Lt. Twedt's crash site since they were involved in a mid-air collision. Ms. Dale contacted the Twedt family ( Lt. Twedt's son, Mr. Bill Twedt) to advise them of our search. They have joined the Wisner family in requesting the support of your organization and expertise.

Both families have maternally related living members to participate in DNA sampling to verify identification of remains if your efforts are rewarded.

The data package we are submitting herewith is a compilation of official government records, email correspondence of the search team, maps, photos of recovered P-38 parts and the names and locations of witnesses to the crash incident. We have possibly included an excess of data, but we believe it makes a convincing case to warrant your involvement.

In the blue binder you will find:

- Photos of Lt.'s Wisner & Twedt with identification of the relatives to be contacted concerning all aspects of the search for their crash sites, remains, personal effects and records.

- Official mission records from the 1st FG and 71st FS including missing aircrew reports (MACR's) and related German records of the capture of Lt. Virgil Olson who parachuted from the crash incident and became a POW .

- A summary of the search chronology, identification of the key search people recruited in the Ritten, Sarntal and Bolzano areas, and maps that definitize the suspect crash sites along with photos of P-38 equipment recovered and the identification of witnesses interviewed about the crashes.

- A sampling of email correspondence that initiated and drove the search effort, showing the development of the critical information threads that have led us to the conclusion that the crash sites have been sufficiently defined to enlist official examination by your organization.

- A section outlining the background of earlier CIL involvement (circa 1952) that recorded the recovery of the ID bracelet of Lt. Wisner and internment of certain remains at Griesheim/Main mausoleum and subsequent routing of the bracelet and CIL file 5034 to USAQMG Memorial Division. That file is currently reported 'missing' by CILHI. The Wisner family requests your aid in shedding any light possible on the contents of the file, the circumstances of its routing and disposition, and any potential routes of inquiry.

A separate enclosure is a complete copy of the Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) obtained by Ms. Dale under the Freedom of Information Act from the DRB, TAGO in Arlington, VA.

We hope we have put together sufficient and compelling evidence of the location

of the crash sites of Lt.'s Wisner & Twedt to enable a rapid & successful exhumation of remains which can be identified as those of one, or other or both of the victims. Witnesses of the two crash sites in question have testified that the pilots' remains were interred in shallow graves nearby and have not since been relocated.

We hope you will communicate any further needs for information and advise the families of your intent and progress.

Thanking you for the families and for our search team,

Best regards and good luck.

Jim Graham

---

**The team knew that it would be weeks before the 21st TSC would complete its preliminary investigation of the case , so thought was given to what actions the team could take to further enhance the data and evidence. It was decided that Christoph, Inga and Paolo should continue to interview people in the Sarn Valley to uncover any more witnesses and to try to correlate the stories, locations & artifacts more precisely, but to avoid any physical searches that might disturb original settings or irritate residents.**

**Diana began to reflect upon the missing ID bracelet and CIL file described in the IDPF that she had received in 1999. Johnie Webb of CILHI had told her in December 1999 that the file #5034 was missing and without it they could not determine what may have become of Bill wisner's ID bracelet. That frustrating revelation was the event that kicked off this whole search! Now that the team had laid new evidence in the hands of the government, maybe it was time to see what might have happened to the file.**

**Diana contacted CILHI (Central Identification Laboratories in Hawaii) to see if there was anything that could be done to locate the missing file. She was told that the file was held at the archival records repository in Suitland, Maryland. Jim was about to visit the U.S. National Archives to continue his research into mission records for the 1st Fighter Group and his 71st Fighter Squadron, so it might be beneficial for him to query therecord keepers at Suitland. When he checked in with the agency at Suitland for an appointment, he was told that they could not discuss the file unless permission was given by the originating agency that had submitted the file for storage-----CILHI. Jim phoned Diana and she immediately contacted Johnie Webb in Hawaii.**

**When Diana asked for CILHI to authorize Jim's discussion at Suitland, to her amazement, Webb told her that THE file 5034 was in his office! She asked if the bracelet was with it. He said it was sealed, but he opened it and sure enough---Bill's bracelet was there! Diana asked for them to immediately mail it to her. Eventually the bracelet and the file arrived and Diana had the broken wrist chain repaired. One more step of closure took place when Diana was able to present it to her mother---Bill Wisner's sister.**

**Inga directed some attention to another spinoff of the search for the P-38 crash sites. The crash that her husband had witnessed as a boy turned out not to be a P-38---- but then what was it? With some help from Jim & Keith Bullock, the heavy bomber historian in Austria, she received the Missing Air Crew Report for a B-17 from the 97th BG. The bomber actually crashed on the Ritten plateau on February 16, 1945 and 8 of the 10 crew members survived. Inga began a search for the survivors to see if they were still alive. She noted that one of the survivors listed his home address as Seattle, WA, so she asked Jim via email if per chance the survivor, Vance Mac Donald might still be in the Seattle area. A check of local directories via the library uncovered someone by that name in Marrysville, WA, about 30 miles north. When Jim contacted him, it was indeed that survivor of the crash in Ritten in 1945. Subsequent communication between Inga and Vance resulted in an emotional and pleasantly hosted visit by Vance & his wife to the**

home of the Hosp's in the fall of 2000. Vance enjoyed reminiscing with Bruno Hosp about that fateful day when Bruno as a small boy saw Vance & his B-17 fall out of the sky. Another good friendship created!

Inga & Paolo continued to contact more people in the Sarn valley and some of them produced more hardware items that had been found in the area, but location specificity was lacking. Stories were told of witnessing the parachutist (Olson?) hiking down from the mountain into Aberstuckl. Others told of burying the body of a P-38 pilot near the wreckage of his plane and erecting a wooden cross. It was also reported the body was later exhumed by the Carabinieri and taken to the authorities in Sarentino.

The three crash sites identified by the team as X,Y & Z on the Sarntal grid map remained as likely those of Olson, Twedt and Wisner. The team was in general agreement that the site Z, high on the mountain west of Aberstuckl was where Olson's plane crashed. The story of his hike down from that mountain supported that theory. It was also assumed that sites Y and X were those of Twedt's & Wisner's crashes. It was at both of these sites that the bodies of the two pilots were reported to have been buried in shallow graves.

Which one was Twedt & which one was Wisner?

In the CIL file #5034 which Diana received so belatedly from the CILHI, there was a report by a Lt. Peterson who had visited the Sarntal area in 1952 to conduct an investigation of the crashes in the area to wrap-up the U. S. Army's records on the MIA's. He reported that the Sarentino Carabinieri had a small box containing some fragmentary remains and the ID bracelet of Lt. Wisner. He took possession of the box. It is evident that the box was the source of the bracelet that ended up in CIL file 5034.

The investigator visited the crash site from which the contents of the box were derived. It was said to be on a mountainside near Sarentino. The crash site was reported to have been in a rocky streambed of a stream that was known to be a 'torrente'---one that rushed like a torrent when heavy rainfall or melting snow occurred. The investigator found that very little evidence of the airplane remained, having been washed away by the torrent or taken by scrap hunters. He concluded that the remains obtained from the Carabinieri were the final obtainable and that the Wisner case be closed.

This report did not conclusively correlate the reported site to either site X or Y on the team's Sarntal grid map. Inga & Christoph had walked to the area of Site X when they found the P-38 turbo supercharger housing. It was found near a typical 'torrente' streambed. The team suspected that Lt. Wisner crashed at Site X.

As June 2000 approached, the team had not received any communication from the Army mortuary affairs people in Frankfurt. Jim emailed them to ask if they needed any further input to validate an official search for the crash sites and requested a status indication. Mark Baldwin, of the agency reported that they were awaiting data from the U. S., but indicated the possibility that he might visit the Sarntal region in a few weeks for a preliminary probe. No commitments were made. Waiting was getting frustrating.

As the summer progressed, Diana, Inga & Jim coordinated plans to meet each other in person for the first time. Inga & family were planning a vacation trip to Canada and the West coast of the U. S. in August. Their plans included a visit to a friend in the Seattle area as they were to travel down the west coast via automobile. Jim planned to meet them and to at least have lunch or dinner with them. Of course Diana could not resist the opportunity to meet them as well, so she and her husband, Jack planned to fly up to Seattle from Denver and to make it a grand meeting of the search team members.

In July, Vance Mac Donald, the survivor of the B-17 crash in Ritten visited the Hosps and spent several days in the area where he parachuted in February 1945. Since that time Vance has located three other survivors of that crash and they have arranged to meet for a first reunion since WWII.

CHAPTER 15 -- THE TREASURE HUNT

**Finally, the silence from Frankfurt was broken. Mark Baldwin wrote-----**

**July 19, 2000**

Dear Ms. Dale,

Just wanted to touch base with you and inform you that we are continuing to research the case and locate information regarding the closure of the Greisheim Mausoleum in 1952.

We will continue to research the case and inform you as information becomes available.

Please keep us updated with any site recoveries that your team makes and any discoveries that have been made in the past couple of months.

Thanks,  
Mark Baldwin  
USAMAA-E

---

**Jim & Diana responded by forwarding photos of hardware found since the submittal of the search data package to the 21st TSC in mid April. Statements of new witnesses interviewed since that time were also emailed to Mark Baldwin. The team was eager to have them begin the on site search. It wasn't long before they were rewarded.**

**July 28, 2000**

Greetings all,

I have been trying for the past few days to make contact with the searchers in Italy for assistance, but have been unsuccessful.

Mr. Roath and myself are coming to Italy on Tuesday - 01 AUG to examine the crash site. We need confirmation that someone associated with the search and knows the crash area will be able to meet with us and lead us to the site.

Any assistance and email confirmation is greatly appreciated.

Mark Baldwin  
USAMAA-E

---

**Jim responded by emailing the phone numbers of Paolo, Inga & Christoph to Mark and then sent urgent emails to them to standby for contact from the Army search team. Inga responded directly to Mark.**

**July 30, 2000**

Dear Mr. Baldwin,

our date for Tuesday, Aug.1, seems to be successful. Christoph Mair, Jakob Weger, and I will await you about 3 p.m. at Muls/Sarn valley. Please let me know how you will arrive! By train to Bozen? By car? There are also daily flights from Frankfurt to Bozen. Awaiting your informations

with best regards

Inga Hosp

---

**Mark indicated that their schedule for arrival in Italy had slid a day and that they would be in the Bolzano area on Wednesday, August 2. Inga replied--**

**July 31, 2000**

Dear Mr. Baldwin,  
until now I couldn't change all contacts to Wednesday, but I hope it will work.  
Wednesday, Aug. 2, 3 p.m. Gasthof Feldrand, Muls (near Aberstückl), Sarntal.  
As I told you, please take the road to Sarntal/Val Sarentino from Bozen,  
proceed via Sarnthein to Astfeld, then follow the branch to Penserjoch/Passo  
di Pennes. The Feldrand inn is right beside the road. I will wait there,  
hoping to be able to gather the rest of the gang, too.

And please let me know if you are going to arrive Wednesday!

Kind regards  
Inga Hosp

---

**Inga had made contact with Paolo and Christoph and was ready to meet Mark & the Army team near the crash site X thought to be the Wisner crash site. The meeting at the crash site took place on August 1st which, coincidentally had been Bill Wisner's birthdate. This was the event the search team had been working toward for 7 months! Inga reported enthusiastically late that night.---**

**August 2, 2000**

Dear Diana & Jim,  
soon midnight, but I must tell you! The expedition had been postponed  
by the investigators for one day, so we missed the birthday (but without a  
confirmation, if they would be at the place I suggested), so for me it began  
with calling the members (and hoping they would be able to come together  
today instead of yesterday). Anyway, my son Matthias and me went down (and  
up) to Muls, and there they were at the Hotel Feldrand which I had suggested  
to them (100 m away from Jakob's farm):

Stephen Roath, Mark Baldwin, a young lady, and an interpreter (Italian -  
English (!) who would never understand one single word in Jakob's or the  
others' dialect, so we left these to down at the Hotel) - and a car, built  
more for highways than for high ways like ours. But they were very pleased  
with the Hotel.

One by one our company dropped in: Christoph on his scooter, coming from his  
job in a laundry (having changed his shift to be with us), Toni Hofer with  
his huge Toyota Jeep, spending half a day of his last vacation week. First  
we sat down and discussed the object and the mysterious non-matching of  
serial numbers and the open end of the Where-are-the-Wisner's-remains-story  
(you know, the three-bones-file etc). Then we drove over to Jakob's, while a  
thunderstorm was beginning to come up. So I tried to get them on the way.  
Toni got 5 of them in his big car, Matthias and I took Jakob's handicapped  
son, who was so eager to come with us, aboard my tiny Suzuki Vitara, and  
then up we went, up the slope with a gradient of about 35 % (which we hiked  
last time), up to the point where Jakob saw the Wisner plane (and where I  
made the picture I sent you), then hiking the last 30 minutes through the

thicket. Jakob was the smartest, finding his way just to the same point we were for the first time. Mark had the metal detector and the GPS, Stephen had a digital camera, and I had nothing than an umbrella used as a stick (because I didn't want to go up there again, you know: my knee!).

With the first raindrops we reached the site. **AND THEN THEY DISCOVERED THAT THEY FORGOT THE BATTERY FOR THE METAL DETECTOR IN THEIR CAR!**

Well, Jakob explained everything, made a little sketch how he found the plane beside the creek (its water was a wonderful drink after hurrying up!), Toni made a hole where Jakob pointed out the situation of the grave, but of course with no result without the detector. Then the rain came down more and more, thunder grumbled, and we had to hurry down to the cars. After creeping down we "visited" the turbo generator near Jakob's farm, Hans carried all the pieces I mentioned (the ashtray, the metal saw, and some more), they made pictures, we admired Mrs. Weger's beautiful garden, and had a look to the cowshed, while the rain poured.

Then we said Good bye. Toni was kind enough to guide them to Mr. Aster (which has the propellor blade, and the camera). So they would make it back right for dinner.

Matthias and I had to hurry back to Ritten. You know: the summer-theatre, which I am part of the organization staff, very probably spoiled by the same thunderstorm. And we returned with thunder and lightning. But when the show began (Shakespeare: "The Taming of the Shrew"), it was over - and everything was fine.

Tomorrow, Aug. 3, they will have to hike up to the place (without cars), the whole 1 1/2 hour's way with detector (and, hopefully, the battery), guides by their GPS. They will try to find something to convince themselves starting a more intensive investigation next week. They hope to return with a larger group and 2 trucks and materials. But that will not be before Wednesday - and so I won't be able to join them because of our depart to Montreal. And then they will hike up to the other two crash sites, too. Christoph will care, Toni will care - and they know best where to go for information (and to get information, because they are known to the local people). By the way: Paolo Cagnan called me yesterday evening, but then I't know, if they really would come today, and I think, he's also busy at work. And certainly he will be informed, too, by the researchers, and can join them next week.

Mark and Stephen promised to give us their informations about the proceeding investigations. They are nice and eager guys, although not very familiar with our local or even regional reality (which is not simply "Italian", you know, but I tried to teach them a little bit...).

And, Diana, it was nice for all of us, heading up just round Bill's birthday. Just as if he knew. And, shortly before parting, we talked with Mrs. Weger in front of the cowshed, and she asked me, where they come from, and Stephen did a little drawing on a sheet of paper, showing where is Minnesota (he is from Fargo, and my children and I love the "Fargo"-movie!) and where Oklahoma, Mark's native country. And then she asked which religion Stephen and Mark would cling to (because here about 95 % are Catholics). And they said, glancing at me, they trusted in God, and that there would be something after dead. And Mrs. Weger was very pleased by this answer, and mentioned, she was convinced, for otherwise they would not try so hard to find your uncle's remains! Isn't that touching? -

Many thanks for your messages, Diana & Jim. Your home-cooking idea is as gentle as tempting. My daughter Julia and I, having been once in Santa Fe NM, like Mexican style cooking very much, and the others have their

experiences with hot cooking, too, because we had, years ago, a Singaporean sailor as our guest, and he was a very skilled cook - hot hot hot! So don't worry at all! And if you are going to cook, I can do the dishes afterward.  
Okay?

Until soon at Seattle! Or until the next e-mail!  
Love & kindest regards

Inga  
-----

**The initial inspection of the prospective Wisner crash site had been accomplished with a good degree of conviviality and cooperation. The real serious work was to begin the next week with augmented crew and equipment, but Inga would be absent. The Hosp's were to leave for their planned trip to Canada and the U.S. west coast. Paolo would be on deck the following week and was eager to report progress to Diana and Jim.**

**August 10, 2000**

Hi Jim

the Us-team arrived yesterday: six men and two women, including mr. Baldwin.  
They will stay here approximately one week.

I talked to Baldwin: I'll meet him and the rest of the team this morning and spend all the day with them..... if I hadn't try to get in touch with them, they won't have informed me... perfectly understandable, they're used to being very independent, but I think we all could be helpful.

As you know, I'll try to do my best.

And I will inform you as soon as I'm back from Sarntal

Ps: I wrote another article ([www.altoadige.it](http://www.altoadige.it)) in which I describe you as a war-hero: hope you don't mind...

ciao  
Paolo  
-----

**Paolo, the investigative reporter, was really on top of the activity! He reported daily. At this crucial time, Diana was changing her email server, so Jim was soaking up all of the hot news and anxious to relay it to Diana as soon as she was back online.**

**August 11, 2000**

Hi Jim

I'm completely exhausted, staying with the US-team from 8 am 'til 6.30 pm.  
And they started at 5.30 am...

I'm trying to summarise the results:

- no corpses, actually
- two machine guns, one from Olson's plane

Starting very early in the morning, the team went back to the Plunerbachtal, supposed to be Wisner's burial site. They started to dig up the place indicated by Jakob Weger, even if there's still something strange: the turbo-charger serial ID doesn't match with the ID complete list of the three

planes, in possession of David Roath, a very nice guy as all the rest of the group.

They also could find a camera for the aerial picture, but it's not possible to determine where it comes from.

After 5-6 hours of excavating, we could find quite a big piece of fibreglass, under a huge stone. They will go back there tomorrow to make further excavations.

In the afternoon we went to Mr Gramm at Aberstueckl. He still remembered of my visit and was very gentle. We went to the Pazzeialm. We dug out one place, supposed to be the burial site, but weren't able to find anything.

Then we went next to a hut where - as I was told in March - was supposed to be a machine-gun. In fact, there was: the serial numbers match with the Olson's plane, which matches with my geographical reconstruction.

There was part of another machine-gun, but I didn't see it and I can't tell you now if it was worth or not.

We are still quite far away from the truth: to discover the two burial places it's not so easy, but I can assure you that the guys will do their best. I enclose my today's article; tomorrow there will be a whole page with the complete story of the search.

bye for now  
Paolo

Ps: please, forward the message to Diana, who change her e-mail address

-----  
**Paolo was asked to see if he could track down some local Sarentino people named in the CIL reports of 1952, so Jim FAXed him copies of that report which Diana had received from CILHL. Paolo was unable to locate or trace the individuals. The excavation was continuing at the Plunerbach site.**

**August 14, 2000**

Hi Jim,

I'm trying to summarise for you what happened in the past days, which is also described in my articles if you can find someone who can translate into American

Let's talk about:

- a) Olson
- b) Twedt
- c) Wisner

a) We could find a lot of evidence regarding Olson's plane. We could find two machine guns Browning .50 - one of which almost intact - with the ID serial numbers, part of the nose and many other wreckages. Now we are absolutely sure that Olson's plane crashed at about 2.300 meter high in the mountain, next to the Pazzei Alm, or Messner Basai. Alois Gramm was a very good eyewitness in this sense.

b) It's very difficult to determine what happened with the Twedt's plane. According to some testimonies, there must have been an explosion into the

air: this reconstruction fits with the Anderson, report which refers of debris. If Twedt's plane exploded into the air, as you know, there isn't a lot to do. But we are not sure about it. Gramm remembers of a wooden cross, next to the Kirchnock at Kirchberg. But he wasn't able to find it again, and all the excavations were unsuccessful. We scanned again the Church documentation, but with no result. Roath says that there are only speculations and that the cross could have been a normal cross, not a burial site actually. I don't think so, but there isn't a lot to do, unless we want to dig up the whole mountain.

c) David Roath believes we are next to the truth. Today, Monday, the excavations gave some good evidence. The place - which was indicated by Jakob Weger - it's called "Weissbrunn" and it's located at about 1650 meter, next to a stream called Kroessbach. It's the same place mentioned by the CIL-file you sent to me. The excavation it's becoming bigger and deeper. The area it's about 6x4 meter and one meter in deepness. This morning the team found some glass pieces of the "cover" of the pilot's cabin and a small piece of iron or metal which is supposed to be part of a boot. This shows that that's the impact point. Roath believes that the burial site should be right here and says that they will go on 'til they can find some pieces. He's optimistic.

What is questionable is if there's still something to look for. There was a man who found out the bracelet and the few bones in July 1952, but he died 20 years ago. I've already checked it, but I still have some other investigations to do. The carabinieri-report doesn't say if both the bracelet and the remains were founded during an excavation or just in the wood. Question: is there still a burial site? Has ever been a burial site? We still don't know, but we are on the right spot for sure.

Now something about the document: it's difficult for me to say what I need, but it seems that every document has its importance. The three pages CIL-file you sent to me contained some detailed informations which could be worth for me. Roath can't give me anything, officially. So you're the only one - because Diana seems to be somewhere else, and I'm very sorry about that - who can help me... to help you. As I understand, you also have some original documents, written in Italian and very badly translated.

What do you have about some researches conducted in 1947 or so in the area?

Another question: Diana has got the bracelet and the CIL-report, but what about the remains founded in 1952 and given by the carabinieri to the US investigation team?

Where are they now?

It's not possible to have a DNA test with those remains?

Eventually: I never saw a MACR, so that I don't know what I'll need. Not the serial numbers, because we have the original P-38J manual with us. But maybe something else: it's up to your intuition...

Will keep in touch

Bye  
Paolo

---

**Diana was back online & Paolo was feeding both Diana & Jim with the text of his ongoing articles in the Alto Adige newspaper about the search. He was a busy guy! Jim responded with encouragement.**

**August 17, 2000**

Wow! Paolo, you sure are putting out the stories! I just wish I could read Italian. It takes some time for me to find someone who is fluent in Italian & will spend the time to translate for me.

PRINCESS! Diana! You lay it on pretty thick! What is her reaction?

We received a very pleasing and complete report on the U.S. team progress from their representative in Alexandria, Virginia (USA). Ms Tate described the findings and told Diana that eventually the remains & other objects will be turned over to the CILHI in Hawaii for analysis. Diana is at her cabin today & telling her mother about the success of the search, so I think she will be very pleased to be able to bring the remains of her brother home at last.

Your newspaper coverage of the story has gotten lots of attention. I'll be glad when I get it translated.

Ciao! & thanks for your good work.  
Jim

-----  
**As the foregoing message was sent, Jim received a message from Paolo. Apparently the Army investigation team had restricted access to the site and recovery operations. Paolo, the reporter was fuming!**

**August 17, 2000**

Hi Jim

What the hell is happening?

I talked to David Roath some minutes ago and it was a very strange phone call. In this sense: it seems that they could find some remains, but he's not authorised to tell me anything.; he says I have to get every piece of information from you or Diana because she is the first person who will have some good news. As you write, it seems that something has changed in the last 24 hours.

So, now I'm asking you:

- what do you know exactly?
- what does the Virginia report says?
- you're speaking about the success of the search...

Please, tell me what's happening!!!!

As soon as possible!!!

ciao Paolo

-----  
**What had happened was the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow! The excavation had revealed remains that were obviously those of Diana's uncle Bill Wisner! At that point the investigation team notified the**

**headquarters offices in Alexandria, VA and the clamp was put on information so that the family could be notified and could control further information dissemination.**

**August 16, 2000**

Subject: LT William O. Wisner

Mrs. Dale, my name is Liz Tate. I am a Mortuary Affairs Specialist with the Department of the Army, Mortuary Affairs and Casualty Support Division, in Alexandria, VA. Although I left a message for you on your home phone, I decided to also send you an email.

I am contacting you on the advice of Mr. Dave Roath, our Mortuary Officer in Europe who I know has been assisting you in your attempts to locate the remains of your uncle, Lt. Wisner. Mr. Roath called me this morning to let me know that he is currently in Sarentino, Italy and that he has located what is believed to be you uncle's crash site. An identification (ID) tag with your uncle's name on it, and portions of what are believed to be human remains have also been recovered. The ID media and remains have been turned over to the Italian authorities as required by their laws. Mr. Roath will obtain custody of the remains after all of the required procedures are followed. Also, Mr. Roath and his team will continue to search the site to see if there are any additional remains or items to be recovered. Once his investigation is complete, the remains and items will be forwarded to the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, for identification processing.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me .....  
Sincerely,

Liz Tate  
-----

**Diana jumped online to inform Jim of the great news.**

**August 16, 2000**

Eureka!

Got home from an errand and had gotten a voicemail from Liz Tate at Mortuary Affairs. She also sent an email, and after I read the attached, I called her.

They have found two incomplete teeth (maybe caps or crowns), a complete tibia, a partial fibula, lots of small bone fragments an ID tag with Bill's name on it, some buttons and what Dave thought was a portion of a necklace, but I think it might be the other half of his bracelet.

She said they were going to keep excavating, down to the sterile soil before stopping. They've found lots of pieces of wreckage, and the serial numbers match those of a P38 (as if we didn't already know that).

Once it's finished, they'll forward all the remains to CILHI for

testing, so we won't have a definitive answer until probably next year. They're still trying to find out what happened to the remains found in 1952 that went to Griesheim.

She wanted to call me to let me know what was going on, because there was "lots of media" covering the story, and she didn't want me to hear about it on the news. As if I'm able to get Italian television here...

Anyway, I'm very gratified and relieved that Roath and Baldwin haven't done all this work for nothing. I'm going back up to the cabin tonight for two days and will tell Mother all about it. I'll be back in Denver Saturday and will see you Wednesday. On the whole, I'd rather be in Italy, but don't take it personally.

What a ride!  
D

---

**As a professional reporter, Paolo followed the activity in the Sarntal to its full conclusion. He was on hand at the site until the investigation team returned to Frankfurt.**

**August 18, 2000**

Subject: Eventually the solution

Hi Princess

If you are back (you were right: when something happens, someone is always absent or far away...) I'm sure you'll have a lot of e-mails to read. This is my latest message, but I hope you will answer as soon as possible. First of all, let me say again:  
THAT'S GREAT!!!!!!!!!!

Then, I have got three different request: one from David Roath, the rest from me:

1) Roath would like to know if you received from teh US Government a bracelet or an ID-tag, because he still doesn't know and he says that's quite important for him. He says that some documents are referring to a bracelet, some others to an ID-Tag. As you must already know, he was able to find either the bracelet or the ID-tag (I'm not aloud to get this information...) but I assume he wants to be sure about what you have got the 1952's reaserches. I will meet him this morning (aturday) at 10 am, but will check the e-mail every hour...

2) I have only unofficial information regarding the findings: I know they were able to find some human remains (fragments of bones or whole bones, I don't know), the bracelet/ID tag, some parts of the uniform and so on. I know you received a detailed report and would like to ask you for sending me the whole report or perhaps just giving me some details of the findings, if it doesn't hurt you. It's up to you to decide how much my desire to know more is in contrast with your right of privacy. Again, do as you prefer, you know that I've always respected you.

3) I'd like to ask you also for an official allegation: after your big interview, my readers would like to know what you're thinking - and how did you react - about the positive solution fo the case, which wasn't 100% sure at the beginning, as you know. You could say, for instance: "Sono molto contenta!!!" Or, in German: "Das ist wunderbar!!!!"

Hei Diana, I'm really enthusiastic about what happened  
The US team is completing the excavation and waiting for the authorisation to send the remains to CILHI. In every case, I'll let you know  
ciao  
PAOLO

---

**The search was winding up with a triumphal success! Diana let Paolo know her gratitude for his work.**

**August 21, 2000**

Dear Paolo,  
Thank you for the update. I haven't given any information to the Twedt family, because I wasn't sure what to tell them. I'll wait until after my trip to Seattle to meet Jim and sort everything out then. I'm sure the "authorities" will eventually give them a report, but I'd like them to know that there has been an investigation. I'm sorry their investigation didn't turn out as happily as ours.

I would like to know more about how Konrad Runnger knew more about the site than Jakob did. Was he an eyewitness, also, or did he know someone who had seen the site at the time?

So many questions, but right now there are more answers than questions. That's a good thing.

I look forward to your report and will share Roath's report with you when I get it.

Until then -- and perhaps before then -- many thanks for your work and for the information you have given me. I'll be in Seattle on Tuesday and will see Jim on Wednesday. Wish you could join us!

My best, as ever,  
Diana

---

**As the investigation team departed, Paolo wrote his final report.**

**August 21, 2000**

Hi Diana

I'm sure David Roath will try to find out what happened with Twedt, but I think it's better that you don't give more details to the family, until we

are not sure what's going on with his file. If there's a "Twedt file"...

More answers than questions: eventually, yes!

Now back to Rungger/Weger, until you will have my tomorrow article translated into English. This is my information:

As you know, David Roath came the first time to Sarntal with three other members of the team and went to the wood with Cristoph, Inga and Toni Hofer. They decided that there was sufficient evidence to come back.

The next week they came again - eight people - and on Wednesday they went on the wood with Jakob Weger: he indicated the location of the burial site. They started to dig up, with no positive result. They came back to the Feldrand, the hotel which is not more than 50 meters from Jakob's house. Someone told David that the owner of the hotel, Konrad Rungger, must have known something. Rungger was asked about it and he said, he knew exactly the location of the burial site.

The next day, Thursday, they went back to the wood with Rungger, who indicated another spot, which is approximately 50 meters up along the same stream. You know, a difference in 50 meters (it's a very step wood) it's quite a big difference for making a precise excavation. The US-team started to dig up on the Rungger's site and could find some small pieces of iron and so on.

The next day they went on and were convinced: that was the right spot. The further excavations, as you know, confirmed that Rungger was right.

Now, how is the story with him?

I tell you, even if you don't buy my newspaper...

Rungger, born 1939, was only 5 years old in 1944, but his uncle - who lived at the Huberhof, which is the nearest hut/cabin next to the crash-site - knew exactly the crash-site. He went there immediately after the explosion and the fire. Some days after, he went back and noticed that the corpse was still there, next to some remains, not more than two meters away from the stream called Kroessbach. He decided to bury the corpse, took a white sheet, collected all the remains and buried it at the same spot, putting a cross on the ground.

Konrad was told many times about this episode. Two or three years after, he started to go along the wood with the sheep, stopping every day next to the wooden cross. He thinks that the cross disappeared - for unknown reasons - at the beginning of the Sixties, but he has always been able to remember where's the place: next to a big rock. He knows very well the spot also because it is not far away from the water-tube which Konrad constructed next to the stream, to let his hotel have drinkable water. It eventually seems that the US-team found also some remains of the cross and Konrad recognize them.

So, that's the story.

Paolo

Ps: I wanna have a picture of you all together!!!!

---

## CHAPTER 16 -- THE REAL REWARD

There couldn't have been better timing! In just a week the strangers who had joined in the search for Lt. Bill Wisner, would meet and become even greater friends than had already been achieved via over 1000 email messages.

The following Wednesday in Seattle, the three email 'strangers' met in person for the first time. Diana and her husband Jack traveled from Denver and 'set up shop' in Jim's kitchen to prepare a sumptuous New Mexican style dinner for the rendezvous with Inga and her family. As Diana 'took over' in the kitchen, the dynamic energy and enthusiasm evident in her email immediately created a chemistry of relaxed friendship. As Jim hustled to keep up with Diana's cooking needs, Jack and Jim's friend Jeanne hit it off in lively conversation. While Jack was left in charge of the simmering feast, Diana, Jim and Jeanne met the Hosp's as they landed at the waterfront coming by ferry from Victoria, B. C. During that beautiful summer evening on Jim's deck, strong and vital friendships were forged. Dr's. Bruno and Inga Hosp, from the German-speaking Tyrol region of Italy, with their daughter Julia (25) and son Matthias (21) entered into a non-stop talk fest with the group over beer & wine as the sun set and Diana served up her goodies. Julia & Matthias, both charming young people doing post graduate work at the University of Vienna, had no problems keeping up with the English conversational majority. The party reluctantly broke up in the late hours, and the group spent the next day seeing Seattle sites before the Hosps left for their automobile trip along the Pacific coast and Diana & her husband headed home to Denver. There was a warm glow of lasting friendship as the 'strangers' who had found new bonds over the Internet in search of a lost airmen, parted.

What a happy climax for Diana's search that took six years!

## CHAPTER 17 -- CLOSURE IN ESCROW

Diana's final objective was to have CILHI verify the recovered remains as those from her uncle Bill. As she had been told, that would take some time---months. She began to re-organize her thoughts on the long search and set out to write a book to document the saga and to honor her uncle. The long journey will end when CILHI validates the remains and the family can lay him to rest in his Texas home with full honors.

Diana's mother, Bill's sister, is now in her 80's, and will complete the mission her mother initiated over 56 years ago when Lt. William O. Wisner, O-708778, just 20 years old, was reported MIA.

As of this writing, CILHI has not yet pronounced their verdict. The family waits.

## EPILOG

Just before Easter of 2001, Jim convinced Diana and her husband Jack, to accompany him on a trip to the Sudtiroil region of Italy and to visit the Hosp family who had been so instrumental in the location of Bill Wisner's crash site. The trip will involve two weeks of 'soaking' in the environment and culture of the region and meeting the local people who contributed so much to the success of the search. The group from the U.S. will explore the search area in the Sarn Valley and visit the crash site on the Pluner farm where Diana's uncle's remains were recovered. They will stay at the Gasthof Kematen within walking distance of the Hosp family home and will make side trips to Bolzano to visit with Paolo, the reporter; and to the Sarn Valley to visit with Christoph Mair and Jakob Weger ; and to Innsbruck to visit with Keith Bullock, the RAF veteran who assisted in the crash site research.

**Keith Bullock suffered a severe stroke in the early months of 2001 and is climbing the long hill of rehabilitation. Matthias Hosp, the 21 year old son of the Hosp's, met a tragic death on a fall from a cliff overlooking the Sarn Valley on Good Friday, 2001.**

**The bittersweet journey to the Sudtirol will honor the memories of two fine young men lost physically to the world and their loved ones----but whose images, personalities and contributions to humanity will be firmly and fondly carried by all who knew them. Through this search on the Internet, we have all FOUND wonderful new friends ---but so quickly have LOST one of those we so dearly admired.**