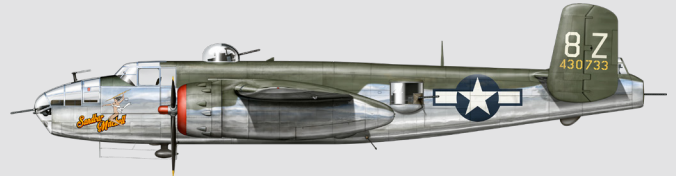




## The Warbirds of Glory Museum

OAKLAND SOUTHWEST AIRPORT Y47

# THE WARTIME B-25 SHIP 8Z & CREW



THE METAL PIECES YOU SEE HERE ARE RECOVERED FROM THE ACTUAL SHIP 8Z THAT CRASHED INTO THE MOUNTAINSIDE DURING WWII.

## MARCH 20 | 1945

B-25 43-27537, tail number 8Z, was part of the mission to bomb the Campo North Rail Bridge in the Brenner Pass of the Italian Alps.

Ship 8Z, part of the 488th Bomb Squadron, was ordered to suppress anti-aircraft emplacements by dropping chaff and air-burst phosphorus bombs while nine other B-25s were directed to bomb the bridge. 8Z was bracketed by flak and had to feather an engine and drop out of formation.

A B-25 could fly with one engine but only reach an altitude of 6,500 feet which would not allow 8Z to fly over the surrounding 8,000 foot mountains in the Brenner Pass. The six crewmen bailed out and landed in the valley and the aircraft flew on before crashing into the mountainside.

The crew were quickly captured by the Germans and held in the jail until they were transported to Gestapo holding cells at the Bolzano concentration camp.

The 8Z crew was severely beaten during interrogations at the camp. The interrogators learned that three of the crew had each completed between 40-61 missions. Due to these robust numbers, those three crew members were arbitrarily designated as "war criminals" by SS Officers and selected for "special treatment".

On March 24, a car was sent to take the three men to a prison camp. On the way to the camp the vehicle spuriously broke down and the men were ordered to get out of the car to relax during the repairs. This was a ruse and they were immediately shot for "trying to escape".

In 1946 the SS Officers responsible for these murders were tried in a war crimes tribunal and hanged. The surviving three 8Z crew members who had each flown on 5 or fewer missions remained POWs until the end of the war when they returned to the United States.

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