

Correspondence with Armand Battista, Kovner crewmate

Military background:

Aircraft: 42-31982 Superstitious Aloysius
S/Sgt., Tail Gunner USAAF
8th Air Force, 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy), 324nd Squadron
Bassingbourn, England

Feb 22, 2008

After graduating high school in 1939, I worked odd jobs and joined the National Guard. In 1940 we were ordered to serve a year in the regular army, but that year turned into five years.

From 1940 to 1943, I was in the field artillery (that's how I lost my hearing). I requested a transfer to the air force.

I was a tail gunner on Superstitious Aloysius. I met Koko in 1943, when we were made a group. I really can't explain how we got to be good friends, he was just a good, plain guy, with no airs as to officer and enlisted man. I did respect his rank when we were on base, but when flying we were all one. I flew with Koko on about 20 missions on Superstitious Aloysius.

The reason why we didn't fly all of our missions together was because when a plane needed a replacement, they would just detail a gunner, pilot or navigator to another plane. Koko did go down with one of our original crew, James Vanpelt.

Too bad they broke up our group. I never felt comfortable when I flew with other groups.

February 13, 2008

We also used to call him "Koko." I always got on his back about him wearing the Star of David when we flew missions, because I knew if we bailed out, they would shoot him. I believe that must have been a reason why he wasn't a P.O.W.

They seemed to be short on tail gunners, which may be the reason I finished first. I was still in England waiting for a ride to the States when Koko, Van Pelt, and Pappy Ingram went down. That was some time in June 1944.

February 11, 2008

On that particular mission (June 21, 1944), he flew with James Vanpelt. Vanpelt told me, when he bailed out, he motioned to Kovner to follow him. When he landed, he didn't see Kovner. He couldn't say if Kovner was killed on the ground or didn't have enough time to bail out.

I spoke with Kovner's father when I got home and sent him pictures of this son during the time we spent in England.

Kovner was a great guy and a personal friend of mine.



Front row, left - S/Sgt. Armand Battista