

Val Preda Crew 601



Back row, left to right...

- Peter Val Preda, pilot
- Elvern Seitzinger, co-pilot
- Norman Burns, navigator
- Luke Rybarczyk, bombardier

Front row, left to right...

- Nello Centore, engineer
- Walter Kean, radiooperator
- Arthur St Pierre, gunner
- Douglas Pierce, gunner
- Jack Reed, gunner

Val Preda Crew 601 Summary

Lt Peter (Pete) Val Preda was one of the more experienced pilots in the 492nd. He came into the group as part of the cadre source from Langley, Virginia. He also had the benefit of Tactical Training in Orlando, Florida. In order to utilize Val Preda's experience and training, a new crew was built around him using fragments of old and new personnel within the group. Three of the men came from the new Seitzinger Crew (including Seitzinger himself). Two others came from the new Robert Murray Crew and the rest were part of the original cadre source. They were assigned as a Lead Crew for the 856th BS and designated as Crew 601.

Val Preda signed out for a new B-24J, 44-40163. To our knowledge their plane wasn't given a nickname. In April 1944, they flew their ship to North Pickenham, England, via the southern route. 2nd Lt Charles Lofdahl, the Squadron Bombardier, accompanied them, thus bumping Cpl Miles Toepper onto the Queen Elizabeth. The Crew's photo shown above was taken in the US after Toepper had already left to catch his boat.

Lt Val Preda flew as the aircraft commander for Crew 601 for a total of 8 combat missions. Since they were a Lead Crew, they didn't fly combat missions as often as regular crews. Instead, they were given full-time jobs in the squadron's command staff and squeezed in flying missions on a rotating schedule with other Lead Crews. Most of their duties involved training the other crews, especially the incoming replacement crews.

It's unclear to us at this time exactly who flew with Val Preda on each of these missions. Lt Seitzinger left him after the crew's third

More Info

Photos



[Wider view of Crew photo](#)

plus another

Training



[Seitzinger CCT 1116](#)

[Murray CCT 1662](#)

Bios



[Nello Centore](#)

Aircraft



[44-40163](#)

[42-110143](#)
[LITTLELULU](#)

Missions



mission having been promoted back to pilot on another crew. On the eighth and final mission the promoted Captain Val Preda had four different officers with him. One was from the Bowland Crew R-11, another from the McKoy Crew R-09 and two from the Hurley Crew 604. It's unclear if these men had been reassigned or were just filling in for the day.

Crew 601 was lost on 20 Jun 44 during a bombing raid on the heavily defended oil refineries in Politz. While enroute near Rugen Island, the 492nd's low left squadron was attacked by rocket firing Me-410s and JU-88s. They were among the nine planes hit. Their plane spun out of control. The quick thinking Walton (co-pilot) was able to level the plane by increasing power on one side while reducing power on the other, thus allowing everyone time to bail out into the water.

Sgts Pierce and Toepper are believed to have been killed during the battle. Pierce's body was found by the Germans and buried in a local cemetery but unfortunately, the only burial records found after the war did not give the location so he is listed on the Wall of the Missing in Cambridge. Toepper's body was also found and after the war he was returned to his family.

Sgts Reed and St Pierre were killed but it's not clear if they had drowned or were killed in the airplane. Their bodies were found by the locals. Reed is buried at the American Cemetery at Ardennes, Belgium, and St Pierre was brought back to the USA.

All of the survivors were taken prisoner. Most of them were fished out of the water by German patrol boats. Sgt Kean, also wounded during the battle, was taken to a German hospital where his right leg was amputated below knee.

The casualty count for Crew 601 is 4 KIA and 7 POW. MACR 7080.

Links to missions flown by the Val Preda Crew 601 are below in their Mission Record

Original Roster for Val Preda Crew 601



Position/MOS	Name	Rank	Serial #	Notes
Pilot MOS 1024	Val Preda, Peter	1st Lt	O-659420	Obtained from cadre source Promoted Capt POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft VIIA
Co-Pilot MOS 1024	Seitzinger, Elvern R	2nd Lt	O-710956	Obtained from Seitzinger CCTS crew Promoted 1st Lt Took over as pilot on Kuntz Crew 616 Interned in Sweden, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7077
Navigator MOS 1034	Burns, Norman H	2nd Lt	O-703941	Obtained from Seitzinger CCTS crew Reassigned to Ogden Crew 606 Transferred to 44th BG, 66th BS on 3 Jul 44
Bombardier MOS 1035	Rybarczyk, Luke S	2nd Lt	O-668786	Obtained from cadre source KIA, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7083, w/Hadden 608 Wall of the Missing, Cambridge
Engineer MOS 748	Centore, Nello	S/Sgt	11044841	Obtained from cadre source Promoted T/Sgt POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft IV
Radio Operator MOS 757	Kean, Walter J	T/Sgt	20324035	Obtained from cadre source POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag IXC WIA, right leg amputated below knee
Gunner MOS 748	Reed, Jack S	Sgt	38449949	Obtained from Seitzinger CCTS crew Promoted S/Sgt

				KIA, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080 Buried in Ardennes, C-11-02
Gunner MOS 612	Pierce, Douglas E	Sgt	14098584	Obtained from Seitzinger CCTS crew Promoted S/Sgt KIA, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080 Wall of the Missing, Cambridge
Gunner MOS 612	St Pierre, Arthur M	S/Sgt	11038830	Obtained from cadre source KIA, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080 Buried in the USA
Ball Gunner MOS 611	Toepper, Miles L	Cpl	36655469	Obtained from R Murray CCTS crew Arrived to the UK via the Queen Elizabeth Promoted S/Sgt KIA, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080 Buried in the USA
Others Who Flew with Val Preda Crew 601				
Bombardier MOS 1035	Lofdahl, Charles W	2nd Lt	O-068713	Flew to England with the crew
Mission Commander MOS 1024	Snavey, Eugene H	Lt Col	O-022364	Group Commander Flew mission 1 with this crew
Mission Navigator MOS 1034	Smith, John W	1st Lt	O-789824	859th Squadron Navigator Flew mission 1 with this crew
Co-Pilot MOS	Walton, Carey J	2nd Lt	O-706020	From Bowland Crew R-11 POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft III
Navigator MOS 1034	Bartel, Rudie C	2nd Lt	O-704574	From Hurley Crew 604 POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft III
Navigator MOS 1034	Saul, John W	2nd Lt	O-706550	From McKoy Crew R-09 POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft VIIA
Bombardier MOS 1035	Rodriguez, Juan S	2nd Lt	O-694476	From Hurley Crew 604 POW, 20 Jun 44, MACR 7080, Stalag Luft III



Val Preda Crew 601
492nd BG Mission Record
856th Bomb Squadron

Crew Mission Number	Group Mission Number	Group Mission Date	Aircraft Serial Number	Primary Target	Mission Notes
01	01	11 May 44	42-110143	Mulhouse, France	Target: Marshalling yard Lead Plane w/ Snavey and Smith
02	03	13 May 44		Tutow, Germany	Target: Airfield
03	07	23 May 44		Avord, France	Target: Airfield
04	11	28 May 44	44-40163	Zeitz, Germany	Target: Oil refinery Led B Section w/ Gendreizig Bombed Saalfeld
05	13	30 May 44	44-40163	Rotenburg, Germany	Target: Air depot Lead ship w/ Hurley
06	22	10 Jun 44	42-110143	Boulogne, France	Target: Airfield
07	27	14 Jun 44	44-40163	Chateaudun, France	Target: Airfield
08	34	20 Jun 44	44-40163	Politz, Germany	Target: Oil refinery

					Lost before target 4 KIA, 7 POW, MACR 7080
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