

The McAllister Case

by

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On December 30th, 1944, Member of Parliament Lee A. McAllister Sr., a veteran of WWI in France and deputy for the State of Oregon in the late '20s, telegraphed his friend James W. Mott, member of the US Congress asking him about his eldest son lost on the Italian front during an air mission which had taken place on the first days of that month.

Mr. Mott replied on January 4th, 1945 assuring his friend that he had requested information concerning Lee McAllister Jr. from the Liason Officer of the War Department and that he was hoping to receive the news that McAllister Jr. was safe and sound.

At this time nobody knew that *Lt.* Lee A. McAllister Jr. was being held in the district prison of Valdagno and that he had only 5 days of life left.

The following is his history.



Mission No. 716

The "monstruous" air superiority of the allies in Italy was utterly clear in the Fall-Winter of 1944-45, when allied medium bombers began to systematically strike and destroy the roads of Valle Padana in order to prepare the final offensive of the following Spring. Nearly every day, medium and fighter bombers attacked rail and road bridges, roads, M/Ys on the Val d' Adige (on the Brenner Pass way) weakening the defence of the Germans. In the Val d' Adige, however, *Luftwaffe* had an excellent anti-aircraft defence (*Flakartillerie*) which protected the main rail for transporting provisions *Wehrmacht* troops on the Gothic Line and, at the same time, defended the most important retreat route of the Army Group "C" of *Fielmarshall* Albert Kesselring to "fortezza alpina", the last German defence on the Italian front.

Mission No.716 was for *1st Lt.* Lee McAllister the thirtieth. It started in the early morning of December 10th 1944, when twenty-two B-25 Js from the 310th Bomber Group of the Twelfth Air Force took off from his airbase nearby Ghisonaccia, a village on the west coast of Corsica Isle and headed straight north-west to Liguria.

The target of the mission was to destroy a rail fill, near Dolcè in Val Lagarina. The formation was made up of 10 ships from the 380th Squadron, 12 from the 428th and 4 anti-flak ships with specific orders to destroy a highly-trained anti-aircraft artillery which was considered a difficult, dangerous stronghold. The ships carried M65 bombs of 1,00 lbs each to destroy the rail fill and each of the anti-flak B-25 carried 22 white phosphorus bombs of 100 lbs each.

The anti-flak formation usually consisted of three B-25s, but at times could consist of six. Arriving a few seconds earlier than the other ships, they had to attack the *Flak* positions. For nearly the whole year 1944, the anti-flak planes had used M1 bombs of 128 lbs. However, that strategy was unsuccessful because, whenever the ships arrived over the target, the artillerymen hid and their guns did not fire so that they were not spotted – then, as soon as the "pin bombs" exploded, the artillerymen jumped out of their "holes" just in time to fire at the following formation of bombers which had to destroy the target. Towards the end of 1944, in order to ward off this "drawback", the anti-flak formations were equipped with white phosphorus bombs. Their fuses were timed so that some bombs exploded about 30 feet high over *Flak* positions, and some other bombs exploded on impact to the ground. In the case the bombs exploded in mid-air, thousands of white-hot splinters fell onto the enemy postings and as many were jettied out all around on impact to the ground. Consequently the artillerymen were forced to stay in their "holes" for a longer time and the ships managed to drop their bombs without being aimed by anti-aircraft artillery.



On that day , after reaching Liguria at Levanto, the formation headed for Lake of Garda. As soon as the ships reached Gardone, the Initial Point for the bombing on Dolcè, they adopted the usual tactics: the anti-flak planes ahead followed

by those which had to strike the rail fill. But during that bombing attack something went wrong.

B-25J "Donna Marie II"

Once the raid was carried out, the report of the 428th Squadron stated:

Excellent concentration of RR tracks just north of target. Direct hits reported on fill. Other bombs cut tracks just south of target. Anti-flak ships reported effective hits in the area of gun battery. Moderate, heavy, accurate flak from target. Two aircraft lost. Four others holed and one man wounded.

One of the two aircraft shot down was the leader of the 4 anti-flak formation, *1st Lt.* Lee A. McAllister. His ship # 44-28937, nicknamed "Donna Marie II", was hit before it had dropped the phosphorus bombs, but it kept on flying westwards. Soon after, however, it lost an engine and, a few minutes later, crashed on the Lessini Mountains. Apart from McAllister, the crew was made up of:

2nd Lt. Derril C. McMorris Co-Pilot

Capt. Jerry N. Baraniuk Bombardier

T/Sgt. Robert J. Baccus Radio-gunner

S/Sgt. Leonard G. Raple Tail gunner

S/Sgt. Everett C. Thompson Turret gunner

After the end of war, *2nd Lt.* McMorris told exactly that the aircraft had headed for Dolcè separately before the formation started bombing. After being hit the interphone broke down and the crew members could no longer communicate to each other. Some shots from flak hit bomb bay and some phosphorus bombs started burning and exhaling heavy smoke which, invading the plane, did not allow the airmen to see one another. Luckily they managed to open the escape hatch so that almost all smoke cleared and the gunners and the bombardier were able to bail out. The pilot McAllister gave a signal with his hand to McMorris to leave the ship. The tragedy of "Donna Marie II" was witnessed by other crews of the same squadron: a minute and half, after sailing over Dolcè, tail gunner Robert Adams in another ship of the formation, saw a B-25 with an engine on fire about 10 miles away. It was at an altitude of about 2,000 feet heading towards the mountains in the area of Recoaro Terme. The plane then went out of control for some minutes and then the right tanks blew up. The ship went out of control and crashed into the side of a mountain and exploded. The airman saw 3 parachutes before the aircraft fell down. At 11,02 a.m. *1st Lt.* John Romagnac saw a B.25 flying at a distance of 5 miles from its squadron but alongside the route of his ship. Although the aircraft gave off a great deal of smoke, it looked under control. After 40 seconds there was a burst of flame from the plane. At 11,06 a.m. the pilot of the B-25 lost control and the aircraft, on fire, crashed on a hillside in the south of Recoaro.

This was the aircraft that Mr. Candiago, the town – clerk of Altissimo, a small village on the hills between Vicenza and Verona, saw falling down near a "contrada" (a group of houses) in his district:

At 11,30 a.m. at Campanella, an aircraft fell down. It seemed to be crashing on our houses and it was dreadful to see the trail turning around the hill and then, suddendly towards us. A blaze, a burst followed by other sinister bursts, the fall and a sudden column of smoke from Campanella

Father Giacomo Tonin, the parish priest of Castelvechio, a hamlet of Valdagno, next to Altissimo, reported the same event in the parish register writing:

"Today a squadron of American aircraft flew over our sky and one of them bursted into flames and fell down on Campanella. The pilots chuted towards Campofontana".

On that day the town-clerk of Altissimo received news, some detailed and other vague, about the arrival of the

parachutes from nearly everywhere. At 02,30 p.m. Mr Candiago received a message from Crespadoro: "Owing to a fire in their aircraft, two chutes (apparently two) dropped towards midday. I don't know where they landed exactly, but one of them seemed to have landed at contrada Repele and the other towards contrada Scogi near Durlo. I don't have any other news". From another source, the town-clerk heard that "one chute was picked up at Molino (of Altissimo) by Mr. Antonio Cavaliere, "Amleto"'s father and another was picked up at Marana.

In order to evaluate these testimonies exactly, it is to be considered that that day everyone thought only one aircraft had fallen down, "Donna Marie II", and that the "parachutes" had bailed out from it. Actually most parachutes had bailed out from "El Lobo III". In fact 4 of the 6 crew members of "Donna Marie II" (Baccus, Baraniuk, Rapple and Thompson) touched ground in the area of Verona, in the vicinity of Selva di Progno, where they were soon captured by the Germans. *Cpt.* Baraniuk, probably injured, was taken to a German field hospital and then, on December, 13 he was taken to Mantova hospital. Later on, he was transported to the concentration camp of Nuernberg-Lanwasser.

The co-pilot of "Donna Marie II" touched ground at Brea, 2 kilometers north-east of Selva di Progno. He was picked up and medicated by the family of Marco Gaiga, but on the following day he was captured by the Germans. On the days between December 11 and 13, McMorris together with his fellows, Baccus, Rapple and Thompson were kept in the POW transit center of Verona. From a later record, dated January, 11 1945, it resulted that they were in *Dulag-Luftwaffe* West in Germany.

Lt. McAllister, on the contrary, after dropping last, was the only one of his crew to land on the area around Vicenza together with 4 crew members of "El Lobo III", which was following "Donna Marie II". He touched ground on Altissimo, near contrada Rappanelli (Repele) and was rescued by a patrol of partisans of Bataillon "Giorgio Veronese" belonging to Garibaldi's Brigade "Stella". "Tiger" (the partisan battlename of Luigi Intelvi), the Commanding Officer, remembers that the pilot "was in a sorry plight for breathing the fire smoke: he could hardly speak", and "Catone" (the partisan battlename of Alfredo Rigodanzo), the Brigade Commissioner, states that he was not able to walk because of a bruise on his left foot. He was carried, together with his parachute, on a sleigh (a "brusola" used by farmers to drag faggots and other stuff) and quickly taken to Molino di Altissimo.

The pilot spent the night hidden in a hole, under the barrels, dug in the cellar wine of Antonio Cavaliere, the father of "Amleto" (the partisan battlename of Giuseppe Cavaliere), the Brigade Commissioner of "Giorgio Veronese" Bataillon. After being examined by Dr. Fongaro, the physician of Crespadoro, the pilot was moved to the house of the Cavaliere and found accomodation in a room on the first floor. Later on the USAAF Officer was examined also by "Jan" (the partisan battlename of Dr. Gian dalla Bona), physician of "Stella" Brigade.

On December 19th "Catone" wrote to his Brigade Commanding Officer "Jura" (partisan battlename of Armando Pagnotti) saying:

As you know, on December 12th 1944, an American pilot, *1st Lt.* Lee McAllister Jr. # 0-759282T43-44 O, in order that you may send to the Allied Headquarters his exact matriculation. This pilot, together with others, took off from a B-25, air base in Corsica. He is not fully recovered now. As soon as he feels better, he will join his fellows.

B-25J "El Lobo III"

The other aircraft shot down, "El Lobo III" belonged to the 380th Squadron and was one of the ships whose task was to destroy the bridge. It was a B-25 J #43-27693. It fell down a few kilometers northwards the area where the "Donna Marie II" crashed.

According to the report of the Group "the aircraft of *1st Lt.* William B. Berry was hit by *flak* in the sky of target, soon after dropping its bombs. The aircraft was struck at a remarkable height and was temporarily out of control, but the pilot managed to keep control at about 5,000 feet and maintain the course of 94°. It was last seen near Vestenanuova. No parachutes".

Apart from *1st Lt.* Berry, the crew was made up of:

1st Lt. Phillip W. Newhouse Co-Pilot

F/O William C. Hunt Jr. Bombardier

Cpl. James L. Noaker Radio-Gunner

Cpl. William H. Krob Turret-Gunner

Pvt. Ernest E. Young Jr. Tail-Gunner

After dropping its bombs, "El Lobo III" was about to turn, when *Lt.* Newhouse saw another B-25 in front of him (it was *Lt.* McAllister's) with an engine going out a lot of smoke. Thus, the co-pilot told the crew to follow the aircraft in order to count the chutes that might be around it. But suddenly his aircraft yolted three times violently and bent on the right. The *flak* had hit the mark once again. *S/Sgt.* William A. Lintichum, a member of another crew of Berry's Squadron described the event as follows: "I was taking pictures when the formation was hit by flak. Jumping up to investigate our engines, I saw a burst of flak under the right engine of *Lt.* Berry's aircraft".

Despite the shots, the ship kept on flying for 5 or 6 minutes, as long as the "Donna Marie II", but then it got out of control and forced *Lt.* Berry to order his crew to bail out. The first to jump was *Cpl.* Krob, the second, *F/O.* Hunt and the third *Lt.* Newhouse. Commander Berry was the last to jump. Before dropping Newhouse looked backwards where Noaker and Young were placed and as he did not see them, he thought they had already parachuted. Instead, they had already died hit by *flak* during their first and last mission. Their bodies were found among the aircraft wreckage crashed not far from Righi of Fongara, a hamlet of Recoaro Terme.



Reconnaissance was made by local German Military Police quartered at S. Quirico, Valdagno. Two days later, the bodies of Noaker and Young were taken to the local civilian cemetery where they remained unburied for 5 days. Father Severino Giacomello, the parish priest gave them "sub condicione" absolution: On December 15th, 1944 local German Military authorities authorized the burial of the corpses. *Cpl.* Noaker and *Pvt.* Young were buried with a religious ceremony and "assoluzione al tumulo". In the parish death registry, Father Giacomello wrote the name of James Noaker correctly, while Young probably had lost his dog tag at the impact and so his corpse was registered as "unknown". Father Giacomello, however, carefully, wrote down the numbers which were found on their trousers. It was the habit of the crew to write the last four figures of their dog tag number on their uniforms.

Krob, the other gunner of "El Lobo III", landed at Contrada Gaiga and he gave himself up to the Germans who were arriving from S. Bortolo. They took his documents, his watch and his cigarettes. Krob, on December 12th 1944, was already in the Transit Center Camp for POW in Verona. On January 24th 1945 he was in Germany in the above mentioned *Dulag-Luftwaffe West*.

Lt. Berry, F/O. Hunt and Lt. Newhouse were rescued by the "Stella" Brigade partisans. *F/O Hunt*, the bombardier, landed not far from Krob, at Busa del Ferro. After getting rid of the parachutes, he went eastwards to contrada Cattazzi and managed to escape from the Germans who were going to capture Krob. Later on he was rescued by the partisans of "Giorgio Veronese" Bataillon who let him go to Posina, to the English "Freccia" Headquarters, where he was seen again by Berry and Newhouse 10 days later, on December, 20th 1944.

What it is known about Newhouse is that he landed on an orchard not far from contrada Grandi, north-west of Crespadoro. As soon as he touched ground, a crowd of people gathered around him. A woman approached indicating that his forehead and hand were bleeding. The woman medicated his wounds in her house: "It stung terribly. It was probably good brandy" said Newhouse some years later, but it must have been simply good "grappa". In the meantime, two men with guns across their backs arrived and, grabbing him by his arms, they hurriedly dragged him towards the wood. As they were escaping, they heard some shots coming from the contrada: the partisans had arrived only a few seconds earlier than the Germans and rescued the airmen from capture.

As commanding Officer Berry dropped last, he was probably the pilot that was seen landing on the north of Castigliero not far from the area where the plane crashed. He remained hidden in the woods until the partisans of "Romeo" Bataillon picked him up and took him to one of their bases, contrada Caile in the south of Recoaro.

"Catone", informed of the rescue of the 3 men, immediately tried to get in touch with them,

in order to take them to the English "Dardo" Mission base which, in turn, would take them to the "Freccia" Mission base. "When I reached "Giorgio Veronese" Bataillon – told "Catone" – two parachutes had already been sent to the exact destination while the third one, *Lt. McAllister* stood at a family for several days because of a wrench in his ankle.

Lt. Newhouse's report confirms "Catone's" adding also a few details: he had joined Berry and they were taken to the partisan's house where they were told that a British Captain (probably Orr-Ewing) would arrive and organise their transfer to the local No.1 Special Forces Headquarters, the "Freccia".

Everything went well: after a few days the partisans escorted the 2 Americans, wearing civilian clothes, to the Mission "Dardo", hidden in the hills over Recoaro. Orr-Ewing let them go through the nearby Val Leogra and, from there to Posina, to the "Freccia" Headquarters. Here, as mentioned before, on December 20, Newhouse and Berry saw Hunt again.

But soon afterwards they separated: Hunt could join his Squadron going through Switzerland, probably with a help from a partisan courier that Wilkinson had contacted. *Lt. Berry* and *Lt. Newhouse*, instead, went eastwards trying to reach Yugoslavia, but they couldn't get beyond Friuli Region. Here, they joined the American Mission base (AZTEC) commanded by *Capt. Joseph Benucci* who controlled the area around Belluno, and then the FRA Mission base commanded by the English *Capt. Paul Newton Brietsche*. After a failed attempt to cross the lines, they remained with the base until the end of the war, and as they took part in several operations of the mission, Captain Brietsche, on May 17th 1945 proposed 1st *Lt. Berry* for a medal.

The colour of hellebore

If this was the fate of the 11 members of the 2 crews, what was the fate of the twelfth? *McAllister* remained hidden in the house of the Cavaliere where "the food was milk, cheese, little bread, water, butter and garlic". *McAllister*, in fact, had learnt only two Italian words: milk and cheese! On the first days the officer was not able to get used to that kind of food which, in addition, was rather meagre because the guests were poor. But he was also aware of the looming danger because the house was in the middle of the contrada and he could clearly hear the Germans shout and shoot. He had seen the houses of the contradas and the barns burnt because of the retaliations of the Germans. Besides the German Police was still searching for the "missing parachutes". Counting those who had died and those who had been POW, the resulting numbers was not that of the twelve men of the 2 crews. The rest must have been hidden somewhere in the area and nine days after the shooting down of the aircraft, the Germans were still mopping up the northern Valle del Chiampo.

But despite the serious risks, the Cavaliere family kept *Lt. McAllister* hidden until he was completely recovered. Then, on December 28th "Catone" wrote to "Jura" saying: "the American Officer has recovered and as soon as possible, he will be taken to that place in order to be sent to the Military Mission base". Unfortunately, the "Stella" Brigade partisans couldn't rely on the help of the "Dardo" Mission, (as for Berry and Newhouse) which had already left the northern Valle dell' Agno because of the above mentioned mopping up. "Catone" could be helped by the "Romeo" Bataillon commanded by "Armonica" (the battlename of the partisan Benvenuto Volpato) and by his Brigade Commanding Officer "Jura", who was in the area of Recoaro just on those days. As the areas they had to go through to reach the "Romeo" Bataillon were intensely patrolled by the Germans and by the "Brigata Nera" of Valdagno (fascist troops), it was necessary for them to move with very few men. That is why *Lt. McAllister* was escorted by two partisans only: "Catone" and "Amleto", who were the local "political" representatives of the "Garibaldi" Divisions.

On the very evening of December 28th 1944, the three men left Molino of Altissimo. *Lt. McAllister* was wearing a civilian cloth of "Amleto"'s (on his uniform) and a "paletot" of "Tigre"'s. Before leaving the house of the Cavalieres, McAllister gave "Amleto" his red, gold-bordered fountain pen as a present. Only on December 31st they arrived at contrada Caile, where "Catone" hoped to meet "Jura" and the headquarters of the "Romeo" Division: But nobody was there. They looked for in the nearby contradas, but unsuccessfully: "Jura" and the Partisan had abandoned that area because of a mopping up which had taken place a few days before. The three men, left with no help or support, were forced to spend the last night of 1944 in a "hole" dug in the wood, where "Catone" had already stood overnight some time before.

The following morning, January 1st 1945, at 8 o'clock "Catone" left "Amleto" and McAllister in the hiding place and went to the opposite side of the valley, on the slopes of Civillina, where he met "Zita" (the partisan battlename of Virginia Zuccante), a partisan courier who told him that "Jura" and the "Romeo" Division were probably in the nearby contrada Camonda. "Catone" got back to his two fellows and together, they set off again for the new destination. To get there, however, they had to cross, in broad daylight, the Recoaro-Valdagno provincial road, which was constantly run along by the motor vehicles of the *Oberbefehl Sud-West* (South West General Headquarters) of Kesselring located in Recoaro since September 1944.

From that moment on a tragic doom awaited *Ist Lt. McAllister*. On that very evening "Catone" informed "Jura" about the events, as follows:

Dear Jura, I guess you have heard the intense shooting from an armoured car towards the left side of the Agno today, that was caused by Amleto, McAllister and myself. We were crossing the main road, Amleto and I had just reached the other side and we were about to descend along the left bank of the river [actually it was the right bank], when a German car arrived at full speed. All three had reached the Agno when they began to shoot. Seeing the danger, we began to run while McAllister stopped and went back towards the Germans possibly fearing being hit and taken prisoner. We could have saved him if we had shot at the Germans, but this action would have caused retaliation and the consequent ruin of the area.

Lt. McAllister was captured by the Germans and was not taken to their headquarters, but to the Valdagno prison since he was not considered a war prisoner, but a "bandit" captured while trying to run off the provincial road together with other "bandits". Here the McAllister Case begins. "Catone", in fact, says that under the "paletot" and the civilian cloth Lee Antony was wearing the uniform. It is known that at the prison the American officer gave his name and the number of his dog tag. His name was not written down correctly (Amo or Max Allisberg) in the prison registry. He probably appealed to the Ginevra Convention regarding war prisoners.

But *Ist Lt. Lee A. McAllister Jr.* was treated as a "bandit" to the end. Why? Some hypotheses are possible: first, the Germans might have really believed he was a "bandit", because of his civilian clothes and his attempt to escape together with the other two men. Secondly, once they realized he was an American officer, he was probably associated with the two B-25s shot down 20 days before. But, unlike the other pilots, (who were taken prisoners by the Germans or picked up by the partisans and guided to the "Freccia" Mission base some days later) McAllister was protected and hidden, for quite a long time, by those the Germans called "bandits". This condition made him a possible source of information about the partisans he met and their "bases", all the more so, they sent a note on which "Catone" unwisely

had written his address in order to keep in touch with the officer at the end of the war. Thirdly, McAllister on his way back to the English Mission base had passed in the proximity of the OBSW. He had been captured in an area near the strategically important German defence for the Italian front, almost immediately after the Command had discovered that for the several months preceeding they had been spied on by the "Dardo" Mission.

Probably due to all these reasons German Military Police personally dealt with the case of the Officer/"bandit" with particular cruelty excluding the local fascists. The airman was kept in custody for 8 days, during which he was tortured to force him to reveal the names of the partisans who had helped him. However he was not always in the ire of the German Military Police, but somehow he was helped by the partisan couriers who were prisoners in the same jail. Lee Antony did not reveal any names (the Cavaliere family was never an object of retaliation), but even if he had revealed them, he would not have escaped death. He was doomed to die because, after treating him as a "bandit", the Germans could no longer recognize him as a prisoner of war without being charged for violating the international agreement. *Lt. McAllister* could not live as an "American Officer", but had to die as a "bandit". And this is what exactly happened.

At 03.30 p.m. on January 9th, 1945 two German military policemen arrived at the office of the town-clerk of Recoaro, Mr. Antonio Maroso, stating that they had shot a bandit who was trying to run off the provincial road. Mr. Maroso, together with the town Doctor Cuileddu, immediately went to the place pointed out by the two Germans, to Facchini di Destra. In his stament, written at 04,30 p.m. for the Public Prosecutor's Office and for the lower-court judge, Mr. Maroso wrote:

I found the corpse of a man who appeared to be about thirty-five, straight brown hair, a shaved face except for a pointed, sparse beard, brown eyelashes and eyebrows a regular face, nose, month and chin, no particular signs, height 1.70 m. (5'10'') wearing long military trousers, a cotton flannel, military rubber-soled shoes, carrying no documents. From the examination of the corpse immediately done by the doctor, it resulted that the "unkown person" must have died at about 03,00 p.m. due to wounds provoked by bullets which had penetrated in the nape of the neck and gone out the right eye and left jaw.

It was a real execution, and Dr. Cuileddu said his death was sudden. The place, the same where he had been captured, and the time had been chosen intentionally by the Germans to intimidate the partisans who were known to be present in the surrounding mountains. They had to "see" the end awaiting them. They had to understand that if an American Officer had been treated like that, they were not to expect anything less. When Mr. Maroso handed over his report to the Public Prosecutor's Office the following day, he wrote:

From information now obtained through Mr. Olinto Randon, prefect commissioner of Valdagno, it has been ascertained that the dead man, a Max Allisberg, pilot, had been taken away from prison by German Police the day before, in the afternoon. Max Allisberg is supposed to be an American citizen.

The dead body was put in a closet next to the Recoaro parish church sacristy. It stayed there for 2 days because for the burial they had to have a permit from the Valdagno lower-court judge. But someone pitied that abandoned dead man: it was Father Giovanni Dall'Armellina who privately gave "absolution alla salma" and in front of the door and among the window bars of that plain mortuary chapel someone placed 3 bunches of hellebore. The Germans were deeply irritated by this act.



1st Lt. Lee A. McAllister Jr. was buried in the Recoaro cemetery on January 11th 1945 with no ceremony and no coffin by order of the German Police.

On February 26th, the lower-court judge Mencarelli regarding the killing of "A.M. Allisberg", asked the prefect commissioner of Recoaro to record in a report the statements of town Doctor Mario Cuileddu referring to the exact cause and location of the wounds found on the corpse, the cause of death, the kind of weapon which provoked the wounds and probable distance of shooting. Of course some of the judges from the Salò Republic were trying to maintain some law and independence, in fact, despite the statements from the German Police, they considered the killing of McAllister not an action of war, but a murder, probably preceded by tortures because the low-court judge had to distinguish between "lesion" (the nature and location described thoroughly) and mortal wounds made by a fire-arm. Two days later the Prefect Commissioner sent the low-court judge the requested medical certificate properly authenticated.

The long way back

At the end of the war, in compliance with Government Decree dated 3 September 1944 regarding the location of graves of dead American military personnel, the socialist Mayor of Recoaro, Antonio Pozza, wrote to the Carabinieri (Italian Military Police):

I hereby inform that the corpses of 3 American pilots are buried in the territory controlled by this town: two of them in Fongara Cemetery, one in the Recoaro Cemetery. Those buried at Fongara were killed in action in the neighbourhood of Campetto on December 10th 1944 at 11.00 a.m.. Reconnaissance had been made, at the time by local German Military Police quartered at S. Quirico, *Feld Post* no. 11445 E, on December 15th 1944 authorized the burial of the corpses. Number found on the trousers are 10616 and J 3129 respectively. The one who was buried at Recoaro, was shot by German Police at Facchini di Destra on January 9th 1945. Local German police officer was *1st Lt.* Volmer. It appears, the name of the man who was shot is Amo or Max Allisberg. He had been taken from Valdagno jail, where he had been sent following his capture by aforesaid German Military Police.

The letter from the Mayor confirmed what had been written by the town-clerk on January 9th and 10th, 1945, that is to say the Germans were responsible for the killing of McAllister and it also contained the name of their commanding officer. Mayor Pozza enclosed 3 copies of the documents so that the Carabinieri could send them to the Allied Headquarters.

As soon as they got the information, on January 17th, the Americans sent *Sgt.* Harry Basham to Fongara where he had the bodies of Noaker and Young disinterred. Soon after also the body of McAllister was disinterred from the local civilian cemetery and reburied in the US Military Cemetery at Mirandola, Italy on June 16th in the unknown soldier's grave No. 446.

Some weeks later, on July 9th, probably urged by the Americans, "Catone" completed a previous report on the McAllister Case with a few variations. It contained the letter of January 1st 1945 [the original had been sent to the English Command] and some further details:

Report of the case of US Army Air Force Pilot Lee Antony McAllister (California USA) 1875 For Street – Salem – Oregon.

I, the undersigned Rigodanzo Alfredo, commissioner of the "Stella" Brigade living in Cornedo Vicentino (Vicenza), do declare the following.

Between the end of November and early December 1944, US Airman Officer *Lt.* Lee Antony McAllister bailed out of a B-25 plane, which crashed to the ground after it had been hit by flak of Ala (Verona). The officer parachuted in the area of Marana-Crespadoro (Vicenza). The other members of the crew were found by the partisans [actually we know that they were the 3 members of El Lobo III crew] and sent to the "Freccia" Mission base. *Lt.* Mac Allister was lodged at and cured by the family of Giuseppe Cavaliere ("Amleto") in Molino di Altissimo (Vicenza). He stayed there for exactly one month, until the evening of December 29th 1944. Not yet completely recovered he decided to join the "Freccia" Mission and left his hosts on December 28th 1944 together with Giuseppe Cavaliere and the undersigned. We walked for several hours at night and we stopped in the evening of the 29th at Campotamaso (Vicenza). There we left again and reached Recoaro (Vicenza) where we spent the night at Contrada Consolana: As the day before there had been a mopping up and the headquarters of the "Romeo" Division had been transferred elsewhere, I decided to leave McAllister and "Amleto" in a shelter and look for the above mentioned headquarters of the division to which I had to entrust the officer, who had to reach the "Freccia" Mission base. Once I had found the headquarters of the "Romeo" Division on the east side of the Agno Valley I came back and fetched McAllister and Cavaliere with whom I set out again towards the headquarters. On January 9th 1945, at about 09.00 a.m., while we were crossing the Recoaro – Valdagno road we were seen by 3 German officers driving along the road. Immediately we ran down the bank of the river trying to hide. The car stopped and the soldiers ordered us to stop. We decided to separate in order to increase our possibilities of escape. The Germans, with their automatic weapons fired to which we did not respond because we only had one gun. *Lt.* McAllister, wearing his uniform under a civilian attire and "paletot", allowed himself to be captured, knowing that he would be treated as a prisoner of war, as he told me several times. I assume he wanted to be hit by doing that.

Cavaliere and I managed to escape and found shelter in a hiding place at Contrada Zuccante, in Rovegliana of Recoaro. An immediate mopping up took place, but with no results. On that very evening my father was arrested because the German police had found in McAllister's pockets my address, which he insistently had asked me to give him in order to get in touch at the end of the war. Regarding Mac Allister's death, I hereby enclose two testimonies signed Campanaro Maria and Benetti Carmela.

On August 16, *Lt. Col.* E.B. Wassworth of the Headquarters of the USAAF Mediterranean Theater of Operations, sent to the Personnel Department of Washington a burial report on the corpse, temporarily identified as that of *Lt.* McAllister 310th Bomb Group, considered MIA on December 10th 1944. In his letter the officer asked for the dental chart and other data in order to be able to confirm the identity of the remains.

A note from the Headquarters of the Mediterranean Theater of August 23rd reported information from USAAF Intelligence Section stating that *Lt.* McAllister had been captured on January 1st. There was also a report by the local Carabinieri according to which two Germans had shot a bandit who was trying to run off the provincial road and some witnesses stated that he had been taken from the Valdagno prison at about 03.00 p.m. on January 9th 1945 and killed.

At the same time Lee's relatives were informed officially that their next of kin was no longer considered Missing in Action (MIA), but Killed in Action (KIA).

In September 1945 Lee's father wrote again to his friend James W. Mott in order to get more detailed information, but the Personnel Department in Washington urged by the Congressman, replied that they were expecting the official reconnaissance of the body before releasing any further detail. It was then that Mrs. Frances, Lee's wife took the initiative and in early November wrote to the Adjutant General Office of the War Department. This time information arrived promptly:

Information secured from the Military Army Air Force Intelligence Section states that Lieutenant McAllister was captured on or about January 1st 1945 in the vicinity of Verona, Italy. This information was not considered sufficiently conclusive to render a change in casualty status from missing in action to prisoner of war and was suspended in the overseas headquarters pending more authentic information. The Italian Carabinieri (native police) are in receipt of a report from two German soldiers that they had shot a bandit who was trying to run off the provincial road. However other testimony discloses that Lieutenant McAllister was taken from the Valdagno prison at about 3 o'clock on the afternoon of 9 January 1945 and killed. His body was disinterred from the local civilian cemetery and reburied in the US Military Cemetery at Mirandola, Italy. I wish to advise that special troops have been assigned the task of making investigation and inquiries in order to ascertain the persons responsible for such acts and you may be assured, Mrs McAllister, that justice will be done with identified individuals who committed these atrocities.

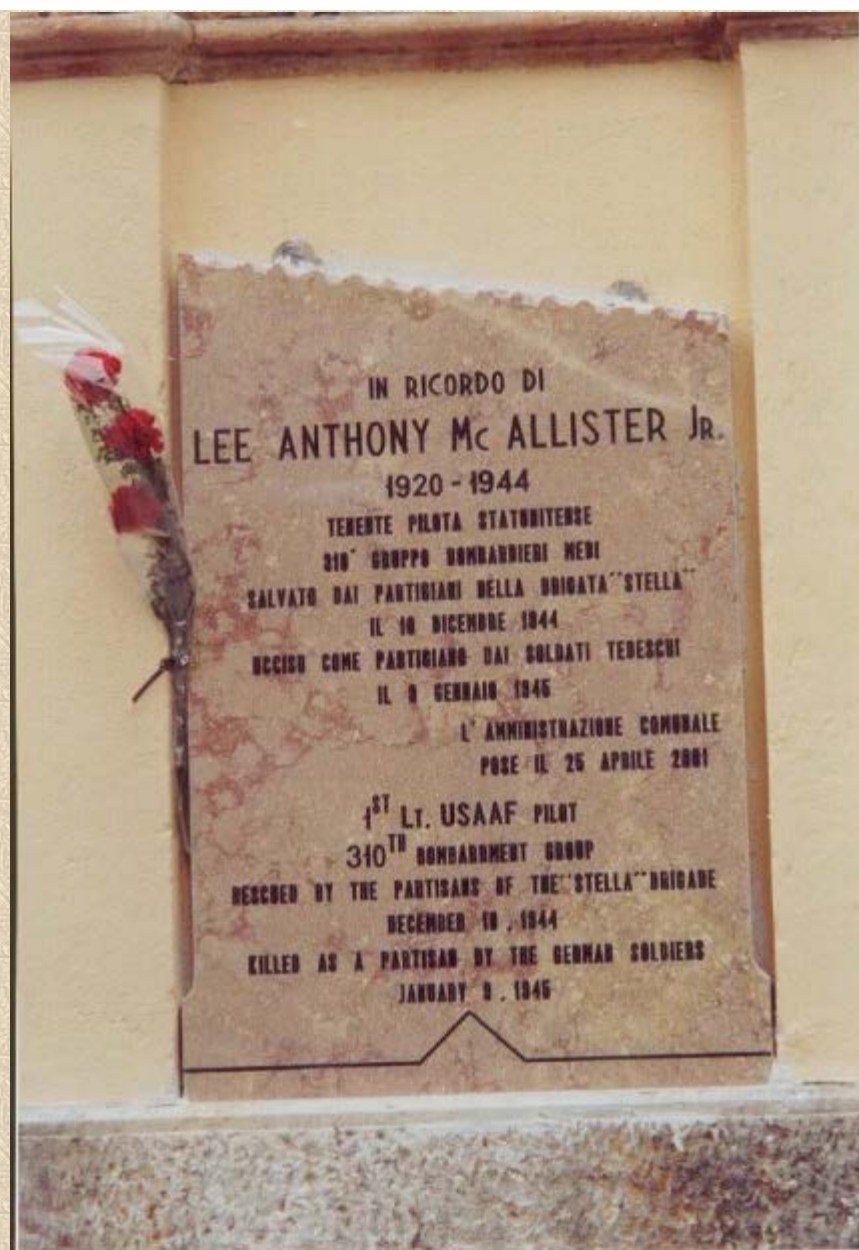
On January, 22 1946 Mrs. Frances McAllister asked the War Department to have the remains of her husband returned to the United States. She had to wait for the official identification of the remains which was signed on June 21st 1946. On that occasion, all Italian documents (already quoted in the previous pages) concerning the circumstances of the officer's capture and death were resumed up except for "Catone's" letter and report which never appeared in the file.

In particular, the town clerk's and the Recoaro Mayor's letters were resumed up: McAllister "was shot by the German Police at Facchini di Destra on January, 9 1945. The local German Police officer was a 1st Lt. Volmer by name. It appears, the name of the man who was shot is Amo or Max Allisberg. He had been taken from Valdagno jail (where he had been sent following his capture) by German Military Police".

In order to clear up the matter, the American document reported: "The discrepancy in name on the statements and on the letters is due to the fact that the Germans probably did not understand his name correctly when he was captured".

The relatives were informed that according to bill NO 383 special plans had been formulated to return the remains of all known American dead and that all expenses incident to reburial in private or war cemeteries would be borne by the Government. But the American dead on the Mediterranean theater front were so many that three years passed before the remains of Lee Antony McAllister Jr., accompanied by military escort on train no.12, Southern Pacific Railroad, arrived at Salem. It was 09.48 a.m. on April, 6th 1949. The remains of the Commanding Officer of B-25J "Donna Marie II", the officer rescued by the partisans and the "bandit" killed by the Germans, now rest in the Mt. Crest Abbey Mausoleum, Salem, Oregon, USA.

(traduzione di *Maria Cristina Randon*)





Contrada Facchini di Destra (Recoaro, Vicenza)

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